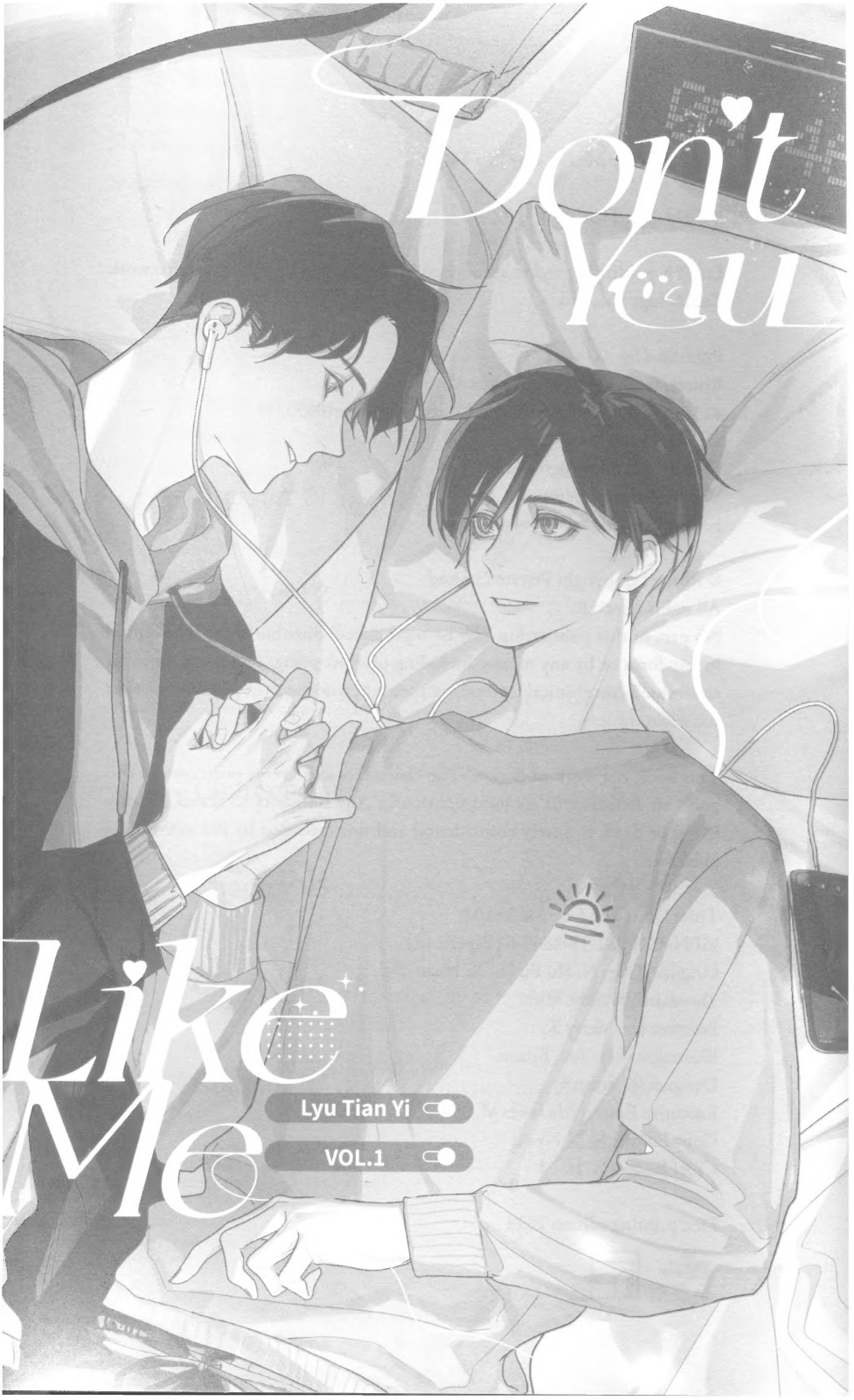
Don't You
Like Me
LYU TIAN YI

love


Don't
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Lyu Tian Yi
VOL.1

*Don't You Like Me Vol. 1* by Lyu Tian Yi

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# Chapter 01

Lin Feiran sat in the music room, poring over the piano score.

With the school arts festival just a week away, he had been gearing up for a solo piano performance. His practice had dwindled since starting high school, and the recent move to a boarding school had meant even less time on the piano. It had been nearly a month since he last played, and the piece, which used to flow under his fingertips without a second thought, now felt foreign despite the familiar melody.

After reviewing the music, he set it on the stand and readied his hands for practice. But his focus was interrupted by a deep, lulling male voice announcing, "This marks our school's fourth Cultural Arts Festival. Culture shapes school spirit, and art..."

Lin Feiran's gaze drifted to the front of the room, drawn by the deep voice. There, two students were rehearsing behind a podium. The girl, Wang Yao, was class president of the class next door. Known for her beauty, vivacity, and eloquence, she was

the kind of girl who naturally made heads turn when she walked past, always at the centre of everyone's attention. She was the female emcee for the event. Beside her stood the owner of the captivating voice as well as the male emcee, Lin Feiran's arch-rival, Gu Kaifeng.

Though the rivalry is completely one-sided on Lin Feiran's part.

Lin Feiran couldn't help but sneak a glance at Gu Kaifeng.

Gu Kaifeng, only a high school junior, had grown to an impressive height of 184 centimetres and was very well-built, making one wonder what he had been eating since young. His well-proportioned muscles and his strikingly handsome features made him stand out amongst others even in just his school uniform. He was, without any doubt, the school hottie.

*He might have a head start on me now, but guys don't stop growing until twenty, right? We'll see who has the last laugh!* Lin Feiran, standing at 175 centimetres, silently seethed as his fingers absentmindedly struck the keys before him.

Lin Feiran transferred to this boarding school a month ago. His father was suddenly reassigned to the European branch of his company before Lin Feiran's junior year, leaving him without a guardian. Since his mother was busy with her career in their hometown, which lacked comparable educational resources, his father faced a tough decision. Therefore, Lin Feiran, who had been coddled and spoiled from birth, was sent to this boarding high school.

Lin Feiran embraced the transfer in the beginning, drawn to the allure of boarding school life and the freedom away from his parents. He dreamt of an idyllic life, but he soon realized that

reality fell far short of his expectations because his roommate was none other than Gu Kaifeng himself.

Gu Kaifeng wasn't bad per se. His issue was that he was too perfect: strikingly handsome, academically brilliant, athletic, wealthy, multi-talented, and perfectly poised, albeit somewhat standoffish to strangers. Accustomed to being the centre of attention, Lin Feiran hated being in his roommate's shadow ever since he moved here. Gu Kaifeng was taller, more popular, and more generous than he was. He outperformed Lin Feiran by seven places in the first midterm exams, and recently, during Sports Day, he also stole first in the men's 3000-metre race and finished third in the high jump.

What bothered Lin Feiran the most was the 4×400-metre relay he took part in. An unfortunate fall left him lagging behind, and despite his desperate efforts, he couldn't make up for the lost ground. However, after he passed the baton to Gu Kaifeng, Gu Kaifeng managed to overtake three rivals, bringing their team to second place.

No one blamed Lin Feiran after the race. Two girls even brought him purified water and first-aid spray to treat his wound. Yet, seeing everyone flock to Gu Kaifeng's side, praising him like some kind of hero, Lin Feiran couldn't help but feel overshadowed. It was he who had always been the star of athletic events since elementary school!

In short, everything sucked.

Lin Feiran bit his lip, his thoughts wandered as his fingers once again danced over the piano keys. Because he wasn't paying attention, several wrong notes slipped out. Just then, The dismissal bell rang, interrupting his already troubled practice.

Frustrated, Lin Feiran stopped playing and just sat there.

This was the final study session of the afternoon. In light of the upcoming festival, the teacher had granted special permission for the two emcees and Lin Feiran to use this music room for rehearsal during this time of day. Lin Feiran could practice the piano while the emcees rehearsed their lines.

As the last notes from the piano faded away, Wang Yao's crisp voice cut through the silence. "Kaifeng, are you heading to the canteen?"

Gu Kaifeng responded indifferently, "I'll go later."

Lin Feiran sensed that the reply was less about going later and more about not wanting to go with Wang Yao. He had long noticed that Gu Kaifeng seemed unaffected by the charm of pretty girls.

There was an incident a week after Lin Feiran transferred. He was hanging out after class when an adorable girl from another class shyly approached him. She handed him a delicate envelope, sparking delight in him. he couldn't help but think his charm was truly irresistible. He had only been at the school for a few days, and someone had already sent him a love letter. Hardly able to contain his smile, he played along and asked, "Who's this for?"

The girl blushed and stammered, "Could you please give this to Gu Kaifeng? Thank you."

Lin Feiran, who had been waiting for the girl to answer "you", was stunned speechless.

Lin Feiran was also quite popular at his previous school, thanks to his delicate features and strikingly "beautiful" face, so much so that he was often mistaken for a girl during his child-

hood. At any school, a boy with such striking looks would usually be the centre of attention, even if he was of slender build and lacked height. However, next to Gu Kaifeng, with his handsome features and strong masculinity, Lin Feiran didn't quite stand out as much. Girls, especially those looking for a boyfriend, seemed to prefer someone like Gu Kaifeng. After all, dating someone prettier than themselves can be too intimidating.

Feeling annoyed, Lin Feiran returned to the class and tossed the letter at Gu Kaifeng before slumping into his seat across the aisle. He watched as Gu Kaifeng casually tossed the love letter on his desk. Lin Feiran hadn't yet developed a strong dislike for Gu Kaifeng at the time, so out of curiosity, he asked, "Are you just going to leave it there?"

Gu Kaifeng glanced at him. "What, should I toss it on the floor instead?"

Lin Feiran could only gape at him for a bit. "No, I mean, aren't you going to read it?"

Gu Kaifeng raised an eyebrow and looked over at Lin Feiran. "Is it from a girl?"

Lin Feiran rolled his eyes as if it wasn't obvious enough. "Yes, she's quite pretty."

Gu Kaifeng just shrugged. "I'm not interested in reading it then."

Lin Feiran didn't think much of it at the time, but he later realized how strange Gu Kaifeng's reaction was. As their relationship gradually grew colder and they spoke less, Lin Feiran never got another chance to ask, leaving him no choice but to bury his curiosity.

Wang Yao, who had already been rejected once yet refused to give up, stayed in the music room. She spoke out in the direction of Lin Feiran, "Alright then, have you guys ever heard about the story of this room?"

Gu Kaifeng, his face a cold mask, lowered his head and flipped through his script, remained silent.

The atmosphere was a bit awkward, so Lin Feiran quickly replied, "What story?"

Wang Yao playfully stuck out her tongue and spoke with a hint of mystery, "Legend has it, someone died here. If you stay here during the night, you might see something ... unworldly."

Just as Lin Feiran was about to speak, Gu Kaifeng snorted and said without looking up, "Think about it, billions of people have lived and died on Earth. It's impossible to find a place where no one's ever died, you know?"

This left both Wang Yao and Lin Feiran stunned into silence.

Lin Feiran turned his head and gave Gu Kaifeng a huge eye roll behind his back. *Can't you go one day without showing off?*

Wang Yao finally headed to the canteen. Gu Kaifeng leaned against the podium to read his lines while Lin Feiran resumed his piano practice. Halfway through the piece, Gu Kaifeng abruptly tossed his script onto the podium and exited the room without a word, hands in his pockets, leaving an air of nonchalance behind.

The truth was, Gu Kaifeng had his own doubts about Lin Feiran. There were two main reasons for this.

Gu Kaifeng, a natural lone wolf, had the luxury of a private room thanks to his father's donations. The school had always given him his own space without a roommate. But when Lin

Feiran arrived, due to the shortage of dorms, his solo living situation changed. Gu Kaifeng, not usually one to get upset over small things, had hoped to get along with his new roommate. However, Lin Feiran often seemed a bit out of sorts and distant. To Gu Kaifeng, the reason wasn't clear. He could sense Lin Feiran's underlying discomfort but couldn't pin down the cause, and this uncertainty led him to start slowly pulling back. Now, even though they shared the same space in both the classroom and the dorm room, they lived their own lives as if the other didn't exist, interacting only in their own bubbles.

As soon as Gu Kaifeng left the room, Lin Feiran stopped playing.

He tidied up the music score and stuffed it into the bench, making a hasty exit from the room as if being chased by an unseen force.

Lin Feiran felt a bit silly admitting it, but he was never known to be a scaredy cat. Snakes, bugs, or rodents that freaked out most people were nothing to him, the power given through experiences of growing up in the countryside. But one thing he did fear was ghosts. After Wang Yao's casual mention of the ghost story, Lin Feiran did not dare to stay in the room alone, regardless of the story's authenticity.

He was raised by his grandparents in the countryside, mostly because his parents were always too busy with work. His grandpa, who often spun tales of the supernatural without any real skill, would be considered a charlatan by today's standards. His favourite pastime was telling Lin Feiran ghost stories, crafting them with such convincing detail and dramatic twists that they utterly captivated his young grandson. Though these stories of-

ten left Lin Feiran terror-stricken, his insatiable curiosity always drove him to listen as if under a spell. He would even coax his grandpa for more. Over time, these stories wove a tapestry of fear into Lin Feiran's psyche, a phobia of ghosts that haunted him even after growing up.

Lin Feiran always had the idea that his grandpa could be one of the best horror fiction authors if he stopped being a charlatan.

After grabbing a quick bite in the canteen, Lin Feiran headed back to the classroom. He wanted to knock out his homework fast, so he could chill in the dorm later that evening.

They had a long dinner break after the afternoon study session while the evening session was set to last until eight. Back in his seat, Lin Feiran opened his math workbook. He'd barely finished two problems when Gu Kaifeng walked in, clutching a stack of test papers—likely given by a teacher in the corridor.

Expressionless, Gu Kaifeng started distributing the papers. When he was about a metre away, Lin Feiran snuck a peek and saw that they were the essays handed in a few days ago from their Language Arts class. Lips pursed, he watched Gu Kaifeng intently from the corner of his eye. Gu Kaifeng handed an essay to the student in front of Lin Feiran and then paused, holding the corner of the next essay, gazing at it for three long seconds. Then, his lips twitched into a sly smirk.

Lin Feiran's heart skipped a beat.

Suppressing a chuckle, Gu Kaifeng handed Lin Feiran his essay and moved on.

Looking down, Lin Feiran's eyes landed on the glaring red

"15" and the "Off-Topic" comment scrawled on the page by the Language Arts teacher, Ms Li. His ears burned.

His handwriting? Complete chicken scratch.

Lin Feiran was strong in many subjects, but essays were his weak spot. In subjects that required a lot of memorization such as Language Arts, he could easily excel with some effort, and his hard work usually paid off in good grades. Yet, ever since he was young, he'd found writing essays challenging, and his messy handwriting only made it worse. Writing an 800-word essay was a struggle for him, to the point where he had to count punctuation marks to meet the word count. Despite being a junior in high school, his essay-writing skills were still at an elementary level.

*Out of everyone, why was it Gu Kaifeng who saw my essay? He damn stared at it for, like, three whole seconds. That was totally on purpose!*

While Lin Feiran was mortified about his essay, Gu Kaifeng, the cause of his embarrassment, stood casually by the whiteboard, putting his essay up with magnets. His neat calligraphy and impressive writing often landed his work on display as a prime example to Ms Li's delight.

Lin Feiran envied Gu Kaifeng for a moment before he crumpled his own essay, the one Gu Kaifeng had examined for three seconds, and shoved it into his drawer. Then, he stormed out of the room. On his way past the whiteboard, he "accidentally" bumped into Gu Kaifeng with a bit of extra force while staging it was an accident.

Gu Kaifeng gave him a look but said nothing, simply stepping aside lazily to let Lin Feiran pass. The whole thing looked

like a standoff between a ruffled, agitated kitten and a big dog that couldn't be bothered to care.

Lin Feiran was looking for a fight, but Gu Kaifeng wasn't even fazed. Feeling a bit burned, Lin Feiran muttered, "You're blocking the door."

Rather than getting annoyed, Gu Kaifeng raised an eyebrow and flashed a mocking smile. For the first time in three days, he spoke to Lin Feiran with clear enunciation. "Today, the weather is sunny, not a cloud in the sky, with white clouds in sight, clouds floating over..."

The students in the front row chuckled, leaving Lin Feiran seething. "You...!"

*What a jerk!*

Gu Kaifeng stopped reciting and lazily tapped his $A^+$ essay on the whiteboard twice, "Learn from it." He then went back to his seat in the last row, hands in his pockets.

Lin Feiran was so enraged that he wanted nothing more than to pounce on Gu Kaifeng and bite him.

To prove his earlier actions were unintentional and to smooth over the awkwardness, Lin Feiran made a quick pit stop at the toilet before heading back to class. He sat in the third-to-last row, just one aisle away from Gu Kaifeng. As he walked back to his seat, Gu Kaifeng could be seen sitting with his arms crossed and chin slightly raised, watching Lin Feiran expressionlessly. One of his long legs stretched into the aisle as if his leg could block off three rows. A limited-edition Air Jordan was on that foot—a model Lin Feiran had been eyeing forever.

Even money couldn't always buy limited edition kicks. Once they're gone, they're gone.

He shot Gu Kaifeng a glare. Gu Kaifeng just raised an eyebrow and followed Lin Feiran's gaze to his Jordans.

Lin Feiran fell silent.

With a smug grin, Gu Kaifeng rocked his foot with the shiny Jordans back and forth. He watched with satisfaction as Lin Feiran, now seething with anger, spun around and slammed into his seat so hard he almost broke the chair!

Just then, the bell for evening study chimed. Gu Kaifeng, all smiles, whipped out a new sheet of paper and got to work.

Lin Feiran turned back to his math workbook, face smoothing over, but the frustration was still eating at him.

Everyone wore uniforms in high school, so there weren't many ways to show personal style except for accessories like their shoes and watches. Lin Feiran, an ordinary student who only had the pocket money he'd saved up, couldn't blow cash on fancy watches, so he got into collecting cool sneakers instead. He brought a suitcase just for his six pairs of high-end, trendy basketball shoes when he transferred to the boarding school.

Lin Feiran decided to wear his prized Nike Galaxy Foamposites on his first day, prepared to wow his new roommate, Gu Kaifeng. He had his whole story of how he painstakingly got them on eBay rehearsed a thousand times, ready to casually boast if Gu Kaifeng showed any interest, "They weren't too pricey, just a little over nine grand RMB." He'd been asked about them before and had always kept his cool reply ready.

Yeah, Lin Feiran was exactly the kind of guy who lived for those moments of vanity! He knew exactly how to flash his coolness!

When he was putting on those sneakers, Gu Kaifeng was

coming back from the water station. Lin Feiran saw him glance at his shoes, so our Lin Show-Off was all ready to flaunt, but Gu Kaifeng didn't even blink. His gaze lingered on Lin Feiran's Foamposites for less than a second before looking away, treating them like they were just regular, no-name shoes.

Lin Feiran couldn't believe it. *Does this guy not even know what Galaxy Foamposites are?*

Without a word, Gu Kaifeng put his basin on the rack and opened a huge three-tier shoe cabinet at the corner of the dorm. Inside were at least twenty pairs of basketball sneakers, including a bunch of super expensive limited editions. Lin Feiran spotted the Galaxy Foamposites, the same pair he was wearing, was among them.

Lin Feiran hadn't noticed this cabinet when he arrived the night before. He never imagined he'd get a rich roommate with a special shoe cabinet in the dorm. Seeing it now, he felt suddenly outclassed, like a villain outshone by the movie's hero, despite Gu Kaifeng having done nothing.

Gu Kaifeng spent a moment looking at his collections, then casually picked out a pair of sneakers, a different pair from Lin Feiran's. He didn't show off; he just chose a pair and put them on, expressionless. He was kind enough not to wear the same shoes as Lin Feiran, but to Lin Feiran, just seeing that vast collection was a hit to his pride. Gu Kaifeng didn't even need to show off for the damage to be done.

While Gu Kaifeng was busy, Lin Feiran quietly slid his other five pairs of sneakers under his bed. When he emerged, his face turned a deep red, the embarrassment burning through him.

Lin Feiran kept hearing about Gu Kaifeng's achievements

from their classmates as days went by, mostly about how outstanding and aloof he was, almost like a cool idol. Lin Feiran couldn't help but feel a bitter taste of envy. He used to be the centre of attention, but now he felt side-lined. This shift left him feeling disconcerted; the frustration of losing the admiration he was used to slowly morphed into a deep annoyance he couldn't shake off.

With a heavy sigh, Lin Feiran closed the math workbook he had been breezing through and, albeit reluctantly, pulled out "Excellent Essays of High School Students" to start studying.

He was determined not to fall behind!

Evening study wrapped up by eight. It was time to head back to their dorms. Unlike most boarding schools in the country where 4-6 students typically share a room, this school offered the luxury of double rooms. As a result, roommates generally got along quite well. Roommates usually walked back together, chatting and laughing, but Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng were different. They walked on opposite sides of the path, almost like there was an invisible divider between them. Lin Feiran, perhaps trying to stand out a bit, even walked on the curb like he was trying to look taller.

They kept a similar pace at first, but Gu Kaifeng seemed to start walking a bit faster, leaving Lin Feiran behind. Feeling a rush of competitiveness, Lin Feiran sped up, briefly getting ahead. Gu Kaifeng glanced at him, amused, and picked up his pace, passing Lin Feiran again. Refusing to be outdone, Lin Feiran pushed himself to walk even faster. Suddenly, they were in a silly speed-walking race!

Gu Kaifeng, taller and with longer legs, naturally had the edge. Lin Feiran realised he couldn't win and, in a sudden burst of impulse, sprinted towards the dorm.

Seeing Lin Feiran bolt off like a rabbit, Gu Kaifeng was a mix of irritated and amused. Shaking his head, he muttered under his breath, "Damn, what's gotten into him?"

"What's up?" Wang Zhuo, Gu Kaifeng's deskmate, happened to pass by and casually asked.

Gu Kaifeng, who was on good terms with Wang Zhuo, replied, "Just figured out my roommate is a little silly goose."

Wang Zhuo laughed. "Why 'little'?"

Gu Kaifeng glanced at Wang Zhuo, who was 181 centimetres tall, and said, "He's short, why not?"

"It feels like a nickname," Wang Zhuo teased.

Gu Kaifeng scoffed, "A nickname? Do you want one too?"

Wang Zhuo made a face. "Nah, I'll pass."

By the time Lin Feiran got back to the dorm, he realized how silly he'd been.

Embarrassed, he was icier than usual when Gu Kaifeng followed him in a couple of minutes later. He decided to use his cool exterior to hide his embarrassment.

Gu Kaifeng, completely disarmed by this little silly goose, leaned against the wardrobe and looked at him in amusement. "Why the long face? Thought you won our little race there," he joked.

Lin Feiran chose not to reply. He, indeed, had intended to "outpace Gu Kaifeng", but he felt too embarrassed to admit such a childish silly thought.

Yeah, Lin Feiran knew he was being ridiculous, but he couldn't help it!

Lin Feiran's face flushed as he glared coldly at Gu Kaifeng. He was about to snap back when his phone rang. He stepped outside and checked the caller ID, surprised to see his dad's number. His dad, Lin Chengyu, had only left for Europe a month ago and wasn't due back for another two months.

"Hey, Dad. Why are you calling from this number? Aren't you still in Europe?" Lin Feiran asked after picking up.

"Feiran, your grandpa's not doing well," Lin Chengyu's voice came through, heavy with concern.

A chill ran through Lin Feiran. He went quiet. A moment later, he responded carefully.

Lin Chengyu explained that his grandpa's stable condition had suddenly deteriorated. He would come to Lin Feiran's school the next morning to take him back to their family home in the countryside to visit his grandpa, perhaps for the last time.

"Okay, Dad. I'll get ready." Lin Feiran managed to say, ending the call shortly after.

Lin Feiran returned to his dorm room paler than before, though it was barely noticeable due to his fair skin. Gu Kaifeng, still leaning against the wardrobe, hadn't moved since Lin Feiran left. He didn't seem to have let go of the earlier embarrassing topic either. "So, were you race-walking with me earlier? How old are you, huh?" he teased as soon as Lin Feiran closed the door behind him.

The jab hit Lin Feiran hard, already fraught with worry. He clenched his fists, glaring. "Just shut up!" he snapped.

Gu Kaifeng, seeing Lin Feiran irritated, felt even more

amused. He just snorted and shrugged nonchalantly and grabbed his basin to leave.

Lin Feiran took off his school uniform, crawled into bed, and pulled the blanket over his head. The thought of his grandpa becoming just a black-and-white photo and a small box of ashes hit him hard, filling him with deep sadness and emptiness.

He and his grandpa were incredibly close. He had lived with his grandparents in the countryside until he was seven before moving to the city where his father worked for elementary school. But he always returned to his grandparent's house every winter and summer break, a tradition that faded as he got busier in middle school.

His grandpa was a playful old man, a master storyteller of spine-tingling ghost tales, and a great companion on their wild adventures across the hills and fields. They spent springs hunting crickets in the lush grass and fishing in the glistening lakes, and summers building mud dams in gullies, punctuated by impromptu swims when the sun beat down too hard. Autumns were spent harvesting sweet potatoes and baking them to perfection in a kiln. They would devour them eagerly, still warm and fragrant, blowing on each bite to cool it down. Winters were for creating snow sledges and going down hills with the icy winds blowing at their faces.

These memories usually stayed tucked away in the back of Lin Feiran's mind. But now, they crashed over him in waves, evoking nostalgia as profound as a tempestuous sea. Curled up under his blanket, jaw clenched, he buried his face in the pillow and let the tears flow quietly.

Lin Feiran didn't remember falling asleep; he must have cried

himself to sleep thinking about his grandpa. When he woke up the next morning, he felt awful.

As Gu Kaifeng was already getting dressed, Lin Feiran noticed the time on the clock read 6:30 a.m. Gu Kaifeng had just taken off his pyjama top to change into his uniform, revealing a surprisingly fit physique.

Rubbing his swollen eyes, Lin Feiran realized he must look a mess. He got out of bed, slipped on his slippers, and went to freshen up. Passing Gu Kaifeng with his basin, he caught Gu Kaifeng staring at his pitiful face, not unlike a steamed bun, a little pink and puffy.

Embarrassed, Lin Feiran quickly looked down and hurried out.

Gu Kaifeng, a bit puzzled, raised an eyebrow.

*Didn't I only mess with him a little bit last night? He seriously cried over that?*

What Lin Feiran didn't know was that, in Gu Kaifeng's eyes, he had become a delicate and fragile Princess Pea. Though that wasn't too far from the truth.

During the morning study session at eight, Lin Feiran was called out of the classroom by the form teacher, Ms Zheng. His father, Lin Chengyu, was already waiting nearby, full of worry. With a comforting pat on Lin Feiran's shoulder, Ms Zheng simply said, "Off you go," letting him know that his leave had been approved.

Lin Feiran nodded to Ms Zheng and quietly left the school with his father.

# Chapter 02

Lin Chengyu drove with speed, and in just over two hours, they reached their destination.

It was the familiar countryside of Lin Feiran's childhood—fields carefully tended to, a river meandering through, mountains lush with greenery, and their family house standing resolute against time.

As they opened the courtyard gate, Lin Feiran's old yellow dog, his companion since elementary school, ran up to him, enthusiastically wagging its tail and licking his fingers in greeting. Upstairs, Grandpa laid in bed, his body withered and shrunken like an old, dry tree branch.

The old man's eyes were closed, his expression peaceful, free from any sign of pain or fear. Lin Feiran rushed to his side, gently holding Grandpa's cold hand as if trying to warm with his own. Tears brimmed in his eyes before he could say anything. Standing silently beside him, Lin Chengyu maintained a more composed, almost detached demeanour, his face impassive.

Lin Feiran wasn't surprised by his father's detached attitude; he knew Lin Chengyu's visit was more about filial duty rather than genuine affection. Lin Chengyu was a so-called "Phoenix Man" whose family had scraped together everything they had to put him through school and university with the hope of leaving the countryside and making a new life in the city. With the expectations of the family on his shoulders, he went through university where he met his future wife, the most sought-after bachelorette in his department. The couple had always had a strong bond, and now, they were both successful in their careers.

Lin Chengyu had always been competitive and ambitious since young, determined to escape village life. His father, a local "charlatan" with unconventional practices, had hoped Lin Chengyu would follow in his footsteps. Fortunately, the rest of the family recognised Lin Chengyu's academic talent and successfully persuaded his father to support Lin Chengyu's pursuit of higher education. The idea of becoming a village healer, performing spiritual rituals, and selecting gravesites for the villagers was unthinkable for someone like Lin Chengyu. The thought of how he would struggle to find a wife while living like that sent a chill down his spine.

Grandpa's refusal to acknowledge this and resentment towards Lin Chengyu's ambitions created a rift between them. The old man saw his son's academic pursuits as a betrayal of family tradition. Their relationship was strained, so they barely spoke for a long time. It was only after Lin Feiran's birth that their relationship softened, even if just on the surface. Lin Feiran was only dimly aware of this family tension. He was aware

that there had been a falling out over career paths but didn't know all the details.

Grandpa suddenly woke up, his gaze lucid and clear. He first looked at Lin Chengyu with a furrowed brow, then his eyes softened as they landed on Lin Feiran.

"Gramps," Lin Feiran called out, quickly wiping away his tears and forcing a cheerful smile. He didn't want Grandpa to feel like he was on his deathbed.

Grandpa smiled back, his eyes brightening in the sunlight that poured through the window. For a moment, he looked almost childlike in his playfulness.

"Feiran," Grandpa said, patting his hand, "I think *that thing* will end up with you." His voice was surprisingly strong for someone so ill, with each word clearly enunciated.

Lin Feiran thought Grandpa had meant *it* to be some inheritance, and wanting to avoid the ominous topic, he tried to steer the conversation elsewhere. "Gramps, how are you feeling now? Need some water?"

But Grandpa waved off the question. "I have no control over that thing. It won't go to him. He resents me too much and you, you're the only other Lin blood left... If not you, then who?"

Lin Feiran, confused, guessed "he" meant Lin Chengyu but couldn't grasp the meaning of Grandpa's cryptic words.

Grandpa took a deep breath and tried to explain, but his voice started to wane. "Feiran, if you ever come across those sorts of things, don't be scared. In the end, we all pass on, and those who've passed were once alive just like you and me. There's no real difference, you know..."

Lin Feiran furrowed his brow in bewilderment. "Gramps, what are you talking about?"

Grandpa attempted to articulate more, but his efforts were in vain. He sank back onto the pillow, sweating and exhausted, murmuring, "I still can't do it. Some divine secrets are better left unspoken..."[1]

Lin Chengyu, overhearing his father's superstitious talk, frowned in annoyance. Being a firm non-believer in the supernatural, he found such belief exasperating. His impatience was interrupted by Lin Feiran's sudden burst of tears. It was then he realized his father had passed away.

Lin Feiran held tightly to Grandpa's hand, sobbing uncontrollably. He didn't notice the strange fluttering of Grandpa's eyes beneath the closed lids, a chilling sight following his death. A coldness crept from Grandpa's frail fingers into his palm at the same time. The sensation rapidly spread through his body, causing him to shiver. Lin Feiran paused briefly, unsettled by the sensation, but then shook it off, burying his face in his hands as he continued to cry.

Country funerals were full of long-standing traditions and rituals that took days. Since the main purpose of the visit was for Lin Feiran to see his beloved grandpa one last time and not to disrupt his school studies, Lin Chengyu decided they would

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1 Divine secrets are better left unspoken: A Chinese idiom. There was an old superstition that believed all worldly affairs were arranged by the heavens and should not be disclosed prematurely. It also refers to matters involving secrets that cannot be revealed until the right time comes.

head back that afternoon after Lin Feiran had calmed down a bit.

In the car, Lin Feiran managed to stop crying. Curled up in the passenger seat, he wrapped his arms around himself and cranked up the heat.

"Cold?" Lin Chengyu asked.

Lin Feiran nodded weakly. He felt unusually cold, almost freezing. Ever since Grandpa passed away that morning, a persistent chill had taken hold of him, making him shiver.

Lin Chengyu pointed to a coat in the back seat. "Put that on," he suggested. Lin Feiran wrapped his father's coat around himself and let the heated air warm him up, but the cold inside him remained. Huddled in the coat, he soon fell asleep in the passenger seat.

They got back to school just in time for the last afternoon class of the day. After a quick bite nearby with his father, Lin Feiran headed back to the dorm after manoeuvring through the bustling crowds of students on break. Suddenly, he felt sick and dizzy as a wave of nausea crashed over him, signalling a fever brewing.

His condition had deteriorated by the time he reached the dorm. His cheeks felt like they were on fire, and his eyes throbbed painfully. He was shivering uncontrollably, chilled to the bone. Lin Feiran struggled to change out of his uniform. Then he quickly wrapped himself in his blanket and frantically searched for a thermometer before finally tucking it under his arm.

When Gu Kaifeng came into their dorm five minutes later,

he was surprised to see Lin Feiran, who was usually so cool and defiant, curled up in a swivel chair under a blanket, thermometer in hand. Lin Feiran was intently checking his temperature, his delicate face flushed bright red, eyes watery—it was hard to tell if he was sick or had been crying. He exuded an air of pitiful grievance, almost like a little bantam rooster that had its tail feathers plucked clean.

Gu Kaifeng had just returned for a reference book and was taken aback to find Lin Feiran sick and skipping class. Out of a sense of basic human concern, he asked, "What's your temperature?"

"39℃ ..." Lin Feiran mumbled in a daze, before suddenly realising who he was talking to. Trying to act tough, he rolled his eyes and snapped, "None of your business."

Gu Kaifeng, unfazed, asked, "Need to go to the infirmary?"

"No." Lin Feiran initially wanted to say yes but changed his mind, not wanting to agree with Gu Kaifeng. He awkwardly got up, still wrapped in the blanket, then squatted down, looking a bit ridiculous with his butt sticking out. He pulled out a first-aid kit from under his bed and started looking for something. After a fruitless search, he realized he was out of cold medicine.

"What are you looking for?" Gu Kaifeng asked, leaning against the door frame with his arms crossed.

Frustrated, Lin Feiran shoved the first-aid kit back under the bed. His voice, hoarse from sickness, carried a hint of irritation. "Nothing. You're pretty talkative today." Despite feeling vulnerable in front of his self-proclaimed arch-rival, he tried to act nonchalant, planning to sneak out for medicine once Gu Kaifeng was gone.

Determined, Lin Feiran tossed the blanket back onto his bed and started climbing up to his bunk. He'd assumed he was still agile, but his movements were now sluggish and strained like a turtle. As he finally pulled himself up, a sudden bout of dry heaving struck. Despite retching, nothing came up, leaving him overwhelmed with nausea. With no other option, he climbed down again, grabbed a clean basin, and placed it next to his bed before slowly climbing back up. It took him an agonizing three minutes, moving with the sluggishness of a sloth.

From below, Gu Kaifeng watched the whole scene in silence.

*Damn, this little silly goose is really pulling at some paternal strings here.*

Lin Feiran found a plastic bag next to his pillow filled with hot millet porridge, bottled water, cold tablets, and fever medicine a few minutes later.

"Hey." Gu Kaifeng called out gently.

Lin Feiran peeked out from under the blanket and hesitated at the sight of the items. "Did you bring these?" he asked in disbelief.

Gu Kaifeng replied, "Nope."

Lin Feiran was surprised, "Then who..."

"Santa Claus," Gu Kaifeng interrupted with a smirk.

Lin Feiran was speechless.

Sensing Lin Feiran's silence, Gu Kaifeng's tone took on a playful edge. "Want me to put them in your socks for you?"

Since Gu Kaifeng was ready to move past their differences, Lin Feiran, who normally would hold a grudge, didn't want to appear too petty either. After a brief internal struggle, he mum-

bled a quiet "Thanks" so softly it was barely audible.

Gu Kaifeng, hearing the thanks, casually waved his hand and left for his evening study session. Lin Feiran looked at the medicine with mixed feelings. He didn't like being in Gu Kaifeng's debt but felt too sick to refuse the help. Grudgingly, he took the medicine and ate the porridge, which provided him a comforting warmth. After eating, he cleaned up and settled back into bed, quickly falling into a restful sleep.

Lin Feiran woke up with no idea how long he'd been asleep. The room was dark except for a soft light coming from below, probably Gu Kaifeng reading on the lower bunk.

As he blinked away the remnants of sleep, the sad reality of Grandpa's passing immediately came to mind, stirring a new wave of sorrow. He then noticed a welcomed change: his fever had alleviated. The headache, feverish heat, and nausea that had plagued him before sleep were almost all gone, even though he still felt a bit cold.

He didn't think much about the lingering cold, attributing his improvement to the medicine Gu Kaifeng had given him. He considered getting up for a drink when he was suddenly startled by an unfamiliar male voice: "Wake up, guys, it's already dark outside! Come on!"

Taken aback, Lin Feiran bolted upright. He and Gu Kaifeng were the only ones in the dorm, so where was this third voice coming from?

Suddenly, several more voices, both male and female, filled the room!

"All right, get up."

"Why so early..."

"Your butt's getting moonlight on it, you lazy bum!"

Clutching to the bed rails, Lin Feiran leaned down from his bunk to get a better look. The usually spacious dorm was now teeming with people—around fourteen or fifteen, some standing, some sitting, and a few even sprawled on the floor. His heart pounded as he took in the chaotic scene.

During those brief seconds of shock, a woman standing right below him looked up. Their eyes met, and Lin Feiran felt a chill run down his spine. Her skin was ghostly pale, with dark circles under her blank, expressionless eyes. Those eyes, pupil-less, seemed to float in their sockets as they fixated on him. Her skin was cracked and blotchy, like a mismatched jigsaw puzzle, with her face resembling parched, dry earth where patches of decayed red flesh peeked through...

*A ghost! I am staring at a ghost!*

This realization hit him like a bomb, sending waves of fear that paralyzed his thoughts. He tried to scream, but no sound came out, his voice seemingly stolen by terror. For a couple of heart-stopping seconds, he was frozen, and then he suddenly snapped back to reality.

In a panic, Lin Feiran threw off his blanket and leapt from the top bunk, landing with a solid *thud* on the floor.

"Aaaahhh!" the female ghost, who had almost scared Lin Feiran out of his wits, let out a yelp. She stepped back, exclaiming, "What the heck?! You scared me half to death!"

As Lin Feiran rushed towards Gu Kaifeng's bed, he thought incredulously, *WHAT? Who's scaring whom to death here?!*

Gu Kaifeng, absorbed in his book on the lower bunk, was

also "scared" when Lin Feiran, who had been sleeping peacefully above, suddenly crashed down on him from the bunk above.

"What's up?" Gu Kaifeng asked, his voice tense as his expression darkened. Lin Feiran realized he was awkwardly sprawled across his arch-rival, Gu Kaifeng's lap, clinging to him tightly as if holding onto a lifeline. His chest heaved wildly, pressed tightly against Gu Kaifeng's. Through the thin muscles, his rapid heartbeat was clearly heard.

"Uh..." Lin Feiran let out a weak whimper, sounding like a small, distressed animal.

Gu Kaifeng, taken aback, wanted to push Lin Feiran away but stopped halfway. Softening his tone, he asked again, "What's wrong?"

Lin Feiran tried to speak. He had meant to yell "Ghost!" when he landed on Gu Kaifeng's bed, but the word just wouldn't come out. It was as if his voice was gone, leaving him with only strained, unintelligible groans.

In frustration, Lin Feiran blurted out, "Damn! I'm mute!"

"Well...I heard you just fine." Gu Kaifeng dryly commented.

Lin Feiran was puzzled; *how come I can speak now?* He began, "The dorm..." but the words "is full of ghosts" refused to come out, stuck in his throat again. Figuring out why he had temporarily lost his voice wasn't the priority. Right now, he needed to warn Gu Kaifeng about the eerie occurrences in their room! With eyes tightly shut, he gestured frantically towards where he had seen the ghosts. A wave of unease washed over him at the same time—why hadn't Gu Kaifeng noticed the odd crowd?

Gu Kaifeng glanced where Lin Feiran pointed and casually asked, "What's there?"

Hearing Gu Kaifeng's question, Lin Feiran's bewilderment escalated.

Until that moment, Lin Feiran had been clinging to Gu Kaifeng with his eyes tightly shut. Now, he slowly loosened his grip and peeked open his eyes only to see the dorm back to normal: no female ghost, no crowd strewn all over the place in odd, haphazard positions. Just an empty space.

"Huh?" Lin Feiran's confusion reached new heights. There he was, awkwardly sitting on Gu Kaifeng's lap, his hands on Gu Kaifeng's chest, scanning the room with wide, wary eyes, much like a little cautious hamster.

Gu Kaifeng stared at him for a while. His voice was unexpectedly gentle. "Did you have a nightmare?"

Lin Feiran shook his head. But after another look at the now empty room, he paused and slowly nodded. He had thought he was fully awake before, and the scenes he'd seen felt too real to be just a dream, yet given the empty room, he reluctantly admitted to himself that it must have been a nightmare. There was just no other explanation. *Hmm, were there really ghosts? But then why did everything disappear when I jumped on Gu Kaifeng's bed?*

Confused, Lin Feiran met Gu Kaifeng's gaze and saw a faint, mysterious smile. He couldn't tell if it was mocking or something else, but he decided not to dwell on it. He wiped away his tears, extricated himself from Gu Kaifeng, and hurried back to his own bed, his cheeks burning.

*Damn it, I just lost all my dignity in front of him!* Lin Feiran thought, feeling a mix of embarrassment and frustration.

Still shaken from the "nightmare", Lin Feiran was far from

sleepy. Climbing back into his bed, he turned on his reading lamp, sat up against the wall, and clutched his blanket. He bit his lip and glanced nervously around the room, unable to relax.

Lin Feiran couldn't get the image of the female ghost out of his head. Just thinking about her horrifying, startling face made him shudder. His nerves were on edge, and he was in dire need of something to take his mind off things. Reaching for his phone under the pillow for a distraction, he found its battery alarmingly low at just 10%. He forgot to charge it.

Reluctant to use the last of its battery, Lin Feiran simply held onto his phone for comfort. He was torn about talking to his arch-rival, but the silence in the dorm was making him more anxious. Finally, he gathered the courage and softly called out, "Gu Kaifeng."

His voice, usually firm, now sounded gentle and surprisingly sweet due to his fear.

After a brief pause, Gu Kaifeng responded, "Yeah?"

"When are you going to sleep?" Lin Feiran asked in the same soft tone.

"I'll sleep in half an hour, after finishing this book," came Gu Kaifeng's slightly hoarse reply.

Lin Feiran hummed in response, and the room fell silent again.

Lin Feiran, growing increasingly uneasy with each quiet moment, broke the silence in less than 30 seconds, desperately looking for a distraction. Pulling his knees to his chest, he asked timidly, "What book are you reading?"

Gu Kaifeng cleared his throat. "It's called 'The Death of the Living Dead.'"

Hearing that title sent another shiver through Lin Feiran, still shaken from his "nightmare". He bit his lip, shifted in his bed, and huddled into the corner for a sense of safety. He quietly turned his reading lamp up to its brightest from under his blanket.

After just half a minute, he called out again, "Gu Kaifeng?"

"Huh?" came the response.

"Nevermind." Lin Feiran stammered.

Gu Kaifeng was momentarily speechless.

Twenty seconds later, Lin Feiran called out again, "Gu Kaifeng."

Gu Kaifeng just smirked when hearing his name again. He stayed silent, amused by Lin Feiran's behaviour.

Lin Feiran's panic surged. Dozens of thoughts came to his mind, one being the possibility of Gu Kaifeng being possessed. He then blurted out, "Are you there?"

Gu Kaifeng let out a chuckle, "Nope."

*This little dude sure gets super clingy when he's sick.* Gu Kaifeng thought with a sense of resignation.

Gu Kaifeng had never really been hostile towards Lin Feiran. His past reactions were usually just in defence against Lin Feiran's provocations. Since Lin Feiran was showing a gentler side, Gu Kaifeng saw no need for confrontation.

"Can you let me know before you go to sleep?" Lin Feiran's voice was laced with anxiety.

"Sure thing," Gu Kaifeng replied reassuringly.

Lin Feiran was about to say something more, starting with "Gu..." but he was cut off as that eerie, unfamiliar male voice suddenly filled the room again, this time accompanied by a ca-

cophony of loud, discordant music.

"Welcome to the Disco party of Room 508! DJ MC Headless is here with the hottest tracks. Let's feel the beat and shake it up!"

Dumbstruck, Lin Feiran could barely believe his ears. *Wait, isn't this... a DJ intro?*

"Come on, ghosts, guys and gals! Let's party! Raise your hands and show me your urns!" The voice continued enthusiastically.

Ghosts? Urns?!

Hearing those two keywords, Lin Feiran felt a sharp sting in his already frayed nerves. He suddenly tensed up, his whole body breaking out in goosebumps. Desperate to understand what was happening, he clenched his teeth and reluctantly peeked over the bed, his lips pale, quivering with fear.

What he saw almost stopped his heart—the room was filled with dancing ghosts!

With a pinch of mental preparation, he could see everything clearly this time. These grey, eerie figures were moving to the beat, and everyone was super pumped up. Some were throwing paper money, and a few "hipsters" in black masks were even dancing on their study desks! In a careless, wild moment, the "hype dancer" tossed its head too hard and an eyeball popped out.

Such carelessness!

The "hype dancer" yelped and scrambled to find it, like someone desperately searching for a lost contact lens.

*What the hell?! A club in my dorm?!* Lin Feiran was both terrified and stunned by the bizarre scene. His heart pounded,

eyes filling with tears. However, there was also a strange sense of amusement amidst the terror. He even had a strange urge to chuckle. Quickly shaking off his shock, Lin Feiran did what he had done earlier: drop to the floor, pull back Gu Kaifeng's blanket, and climb in. He clung to the only other living soul in the dorm room like a drowning man holding onto a rock for dear life.

Gu Kaifeng, with a resigned look, quietly put his book aside and watched Lin Feiran dive under his covers.

As soon as Lin Feiran touched Gu Kaifeng, the loud music and cheering instantly stopped. The ghosts disappeared, leaving the room in eerie silence.

Lin Feiran opened his mouth, he wanted to say "There are ghosts". but the words still wouldn't come out.

He suddenly recalled Grandpa's last moments. It seemed like Grandpa was trying hard to say something for a brief instant, but the words just wouldn't come out. In the end, Grandpa uttered something about "Some divine secrets are better left unspoken." Back then, Lin Feiran hadn't thought much about it, but now, faced with these unexplainable events, he wondered if this was what Grandpa meant.

Lin Feiran was overwhelmed with confusion. One thing was clear though. Despite Gu Kaifeng seemingly seeing nothing, what he saw definitely wasn't a dream!

Gu Kaifeng interrupted Lin Feiran's thoughts. "Back down here again?"

"I..." Lin Feiran struggled to find the right words.

"Are you still freaked out by that nightmare?" Gu Kaifeng

prodded.

Lin Feiran shook his head, trying to look composed despite his teary eyes. "I'm not scared," he insisted.

Gu Kaifeng smirked. "Seems like you've been crying a lot lately, huh?"

*Like you wouldn't cry if you saw what I did!* Lin Feiran quickly brushed off the tears scared out of him. He shot Gu Kaifeng a defiant look and climbed out from under the covers. Standing barefoot, he put his hands on his hips and looked up at the top bunk with determination. He ended up standing there for a whole five seconds.

*Huh, how? I just can't make myself climb back up there. Why do ghosts appear every time I'm on the top bunk?!*

Lin Feiran was too scared to go back to his own bed. His bold front lasted only five seconds before he quickly retreated, sitting timidly on the edge of Gu Kaifeng's bed. He nervously clutched his slipper with his toe and kept glancing fearfully at the study desk.

*There were five ghosts there, and an eyeball even fell off...* he thought, staring at the now-empty desk. Lin Feiran was desperately searching for any trace to show Gu Kaifeng, but found nothing. *Well, as expected.* There wasn't a single sign of the weird scene he had just witnessed.

Seeing that Lin Feiran wasn't his usual self, Gu Kaifeng was very amused. "Why are you perched on the edge of my bed like that?"

Lin Feiran looked around, still trying to tell Gu Kaifeng about the ghosts in their dorm. Finally, he mustered up some courage, went over to the desk, and grabbed a notebook and

pen. He came back and sat on the edge of Gu Kaifeng's bed before trying to write "There are ghosts." But just as he feared, his hand, which had been fine just a moment ago, froze as he began to write. His arm felt heavy and almost numb.

Lin Feiran wondered if he could write other things. As soon as he thought this, his hand loosened up. He started scribbling random things in the notebook effortlessly.

Gu Kaifeng watched Lin Feiran's frantic scribbling, his brow furrowed. "What's this all about?"

Lin Feiran, caught up in his test, just shook his head and kept writing. He jotted down a math formula, a line of poetry, and even doodled a cartoon pig. Without thinking, he impulsively wrote "Gu Kaifeng" on the pig's head. Curse his impulsivity and bad habits!

Gu Kaifeng, seeing his name on the pig, was both offended and still amused. "Really?"

Embarrassed, Lin Feiran quickly erased the name.

Gu Kaifeng didn't know what to say.

After several tests, Lin Feiran realized something odd: he could write anything else easily, but whenever he tried to write about the ghosts, his arm froze as if something was stopping him from revealing this supernatural secret.

Frustrated, Lin Feiran threw the notebook aside, refusing to accept this bizarre limitation.

He thought of another way. If he couldn't talk about it directly, maybe he could hint at it. He sorted through the day's events in his mind, turned to Gu Kaifeng, and started explaining. "My grandpa passed away today. I went to see him one last time this morning, and he..." But the mysterious force seemed to see right

through Lin Feiran's cunning attempt. As he spoke, his throat suddenly tightened, cutting off his words into a barely audible whimper. He tried to keep talking but then felt Gu Kaifeng's warm hand on his shoulder.

"I'm sorry to hear that. Forget what I said earlier," Gu Kaifeng said gently, patting his shoulder. "Don't worry too much. If you need anything, just ask."

Lin Feiran was torn between his inner chaos and this unexpected kindness. He was speechless.

*Aaaaaahhhhhh! You've got it all wrong! I'm not here for comfort?!* Lin Feiran thought, frustrated but unable to correct the misunderstanding.

After comforting Lin Feiran, Gu Kaifeng turned up his bedside reading lamp to maximum brightness. "Stay here if you're scared," he offered. He quietly tucked the book "The Death of the Living Dead" under his pillow and started flipping on his phone, putting off sleep for a while.

*Whew, at least I don't need to go back to the upper bunk to face whatever weirdness was up there...* Lin Feiran felt relieved that his current most critical issue was solved. He decided to stop trying to explain the ghosts to Gu Kaifeng for now. Sitting on the lower bunk, he was deep in thought, piecing together the day's puzzling events.

Lin Feiran grew more restless as time passed. He fidgeted, his legs twitching with nervous energy. Eventually, he couldn't sit still anymore. He stood up and cautiously opened the dorm door, peeking into the dimly lit corridor. The corridor, with its broken overhead lights casting creepy shadows, led to the toilet at the far end, adding to the eerie atmosphere.

After sleeping from six until past eleven and not having used the toilet since his meal of water and porridge, Lin Feiran urgently needed to go. His recent scares had only made the need more pressing.

*How? I can't ask Gu Kaifeng to go with me to the toilet, right? I'd rather die of fright than do something so embarrassing!* With that thought, Lin Feiran steeled himself, stomped his foot, clenched his fists, took a deep breath, and stepped boldly into the dark corridor!

He didn't get far though. The terrifying images from earlier haunted him again—the rolling eyeball, the cracked and withered skull face, the crowd of apparitions—all flashed through his mind. A sudden warmth bloomed between his legs, flooding him with panic. So, he quickly darted back to the safety of Gu Kaifeng's bed.

*I'm so screwed!* Lin Feiran thought in utter despair. *What if I bump into ghosts in the middle of peeing? How would I deal with that?!*

He knew for sure he wasn't brave enough to pee nonchalantly with ghosts lurking around. The thought of himself mid-pee, screaming and sprinting back to the dorm, with his pants around his ankles, possibly tripping over it, was both frightening and ridiculous. *Nooooo, if this ever happened, I'd rather be dead than live like this. Might as well just jump off the roof!* Lin Feiran thought with a sad face.

"What's wrong?" Gu Kaifeng noticed Lin Feiran standing awkwardly at the door, fiercely squeezing his legs together.

Face red, Lin Feiran barely managed to get the words out. "Do, do, do you need to use the toilet?"

"Nope," Gu Kaifeng replied simply and honestly.

Lin Feiran shifted from foot to foot, desperate for relief. He fidgeted and blurted out somewhat hesitantly. "Can you... maybe come with me... please?"

The moment he said it, Lin Feiran felt so embarrassed he wanted to hang himself on the spot.

Gu Kaifeng, amused by Lin Feiran's awkward, flushed expression, just grinned. "Sure, let's go," he said, putting on his shoes and opening the door.

Side by side, Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng walked through the quiet corridor to the toilet. Gu Kaifeng asked casually, "So, what kind of nightmare freaked you out this much?"

"I dreamt that our dorm was swarming with ghosts," Lin Feiran answered.

He didn't get interrupted this time, probably because he was framing it as a dream. Seizing the opportunity, he added, "There were like fifteen of them, even a DJ named MC Headless. He was rapping, and the others were dancing like crazy. The room was filled with loud clubbing music and one ghost even lost its eyeball while dancing!"

Gu Kaifeng laughed. "What kind of stuff are you imagining all day?"

Gritting his teeth in frustration, Lin Feiran tried to insist. "It was..." He wanted to say "real", but the word just wouldn't come out. Instead, he finished by saying, "But it felt super real to me."

Lin Feiran realized the trick was in how he phrased things. The restriction of the mysterious force was based on truthfulness. Describing it as a dream let him share all the details, but he

couldn't simply say that there were ghosts.

"I heard this place was a graveyard before it became a school," Gu Kaifeng said seriously.

Lin Feiran gave him a look of mixed frustration and horror. *Great, as if I wasn't freaked out enough! I can't believe he's piling on more creepy stories!*

Gu Kaifeng grinned, trying to lighten the mood. "It's just a dream, no matter how real it seems. Who throws a party in their own grave?"

Lin Feiran didn't respond. He couldn't find any comfort in those words. *They were most definitely partying in their graves! What do you want me to do? Lie?*

As they chatted, they arrived at the toilet. Lin Feiran stepped up to the urinal and pulled down his pants slightly. He took his *little Lin* out, ready for some much-needed relief.

Gu Kaifeng stood about four or five steps back, hands in his pyjama pockets. His dark eyes looked at Lin Feiran calmly. From here, he could have a glimpse of Lin Feiran's plump, white butt cheeks.

Feeling a bit self-conscious, Lin Feiran couldn't help but sneak a peek at Gu Kaifeng. His face was unreadable, but there was something odd about his expression that Lin Feiran couldn't quite place.

*God! Stop being so jumpy, or I won't get through this night.* Lin Feiran thought, trying to reassure himself. He turned his attention back to the task at hand, but now he felt awkwardly shy, his cheeks warming up.

Gathering his courage, Lin Feiran said, "I can't pee if you're watching me..."

Gu Kaifeng gave a knowing hum and stepped back. "I'll wait by the door."

Lin Feiran was finally able to relieve himself. Halfway through, he hesitantly called out over the sound of the stream. "Gu Kaifeng?"

He felt weird with Gu Kaifeng watching him, yet he was half-afraid that Gu Kaifeng might fade away like a ghostly wisp, disappearing into thin air if he didn't keep an eye on him.

From the other side of the door, Gu Kaifeng replied playfully, "Yes, Your Majesty?"

Lin Feiran went quiet again.

Sensing that Lin Feiran might find at ease hearing his voice, Gu Kaifeng started reciting the great poet Su Shi's masterpiece "Ode to the Red Cliff" in his lulling voice. "Suzi and his friends went on a boat to the Red Cliffs. There was a gentle breeze, and the water was calm..."[2]

Lin Feiran's ears turned red listening to the "Ode to the Red Cliffs" as he finished up. What a refined experience!

After finishing up in the toilet, they walked back to the dorm together. Lin Feiran, feeling somewhat awkward, kept a small amount of distance between them the whole time, purposely avoiding any physical contact.

Their footsteps echoed in the empty corridor. Suddenly, Lin Feiran felt that familiar chill creeping up again, starting from his feet and moving up his spine. He'd felt it before during his pre-

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2 Written in 1082. Modified from the translation by Yang Xianyi ( 杨宪益 ) and Gladys Yang ( 戴乃迭 ).

vious two ghostly encounters but hadn't paid it much attention. Now, he realized it was a recurring pattern!

"Not again..." His brain suddenly snapped to attention. He was hit with the dilemma of fight or flight, but before he could decide, it was too late. In the blink of an eye, the corridor was filled with ghosts!

The ghosts, each with a ghastly pale face, displayed a variety of terrifying appearances. Some were missing limbs, some were twisted or bloodied, and others had eerie and horrifying visages of corpses. Strangely, they were all sitting or standing in two lines along the corridor, each absorbed in a book that seemed to appear from nowhere. If it weren't for their chilling looks, they could have been mistaken for students cramming for exams.

Lin Feiran even heard one of the ghosts complain. "Club rapping from Room 508 is too damn loud. Let's go talk to them!"

*Aaaaaahhhhhh! Don't come to my room! It's bloody full!* Lin Feiran thought, his scalp going numb. Panicking, he reached out for Gu Kaifeng and grabbed a warm, comforting hand. As soon as they touched, the eerie noises stopped.

Gu Kaifeng turned to him, confused, lifting the hand Lin Feiran was gripping. "What's going on?"

"Oh, nothing," Lin Feiran replied awkwardly, letting go. The ghosts didn't come back. His mind was still preoccupied with the whole incident, "Just grabbed the wrong hand, that's all." He gave Gu Kaifeng a half-hearted explanation.

Gu Kaifeng raised an eyebrow. "And you were reaching for...?"

"Nothing, really!" Lin Feiran said, sounding a bit flustered.

Gu Kaifeng just laughed off the weirdness and opened the

dorm door. He kicked off his shoes and flopped down on his bed.

Lin Feiran sat on the edge of Gu Kaifeng's bed, like a withering flower, patting his cheeks with his cold hands to calm himself down. He's finally piecing together everything that has happened.

Lin Feiran pondered his grandpa's words. *He mentioned passing on something to me, something he couldn't control.* He rested his chin on his hand, thinking it over. *If it were just some item or money, Grandpa wouldn't have struggled with it. And he even told me not to be scared of ghosts, going as far as to say they were just people like us. But why can I see them and Gu Kaifeng can't?*

A realization dawned on him. *Could it be that Grandpa was talking about... the power of the Yin-yang Eye?*

He raised his hand, gently caressing his eyelid with a slender, pale finger. *I can see ghosts now?!*

The idea sent a shiver through him. *Had Grandpa been seeing ghosts all his life?* He sat there, deep in thought, recalling his childhood and all the old folk stories Grandpa had told him about ghosts and supernatural phenomena. It all started to make sense.

*Wait, that's really strange.* Lin Feiran paused his thoughts and stole a glance at Gu Kaifeng, who was fiddling with his phone while resting against his pillow.

*The ghosts disappeared whenever I touched him. But the effect seemed to last only a short while. Hmm, was it only him, or does it happen with anyone I touch?*

Lin Feiran pondered over this new mystery. He was curious to test it with someone else, but it was already past eleven, and

the dorm was asleep.

Lost in thought, he barely noticed Gu Kaifeng setting his phone aside and stretching. "You planning to sleep anytime soon?"

"I'm not tired. Slept too much earlier," Lin Feiran replied, gradually shifting his butt closer into Gu Kaifeng's bed space, cautiously trying not to be sent back to his own bunk. He didn't want to see ghosts anymore.

Gu Kaifeng observed Lin Feiran's subtle movement, a sly glint in his eye.

Lin Feiran looked at Gu Kaifeng earnestly. "You go ahead and sleep. I'll just stay up for a bit."

Gu Kaifeng, hiding a smile, figured this little scaredy-cat probably didn't want to be alone tonight. "Might as well get comfortable then," he suggested, indicating the wall side of the bed. "Don't want you waking me up by climbing in later."

"Okay!" Lin Feiran immediately cut in. He was overjoyed, slipping off his slippers and sliding into bed. He hugged the wall with his slender body, anxious that Gu Kaifeng might have second thoughts. "I'll just stick to this side. I promise I won't take up much room," he reassured.

Gu Kaifeng shifted over, sharing the blanket. "You can move over a bit if you want," he said, settling down and closing his eyes.

The blanket, recently sunbathed, was soft and plush. It carried a comforting scent, a blend of sunshine and laundry detergent. Lin Feiran slid beneath it and instantly felt warmer. Perhaps it was all in his head after all.

Gu Kaifeng's breathing evened out a few minutes later. He

had left the bedside reading lamp on, dimmed to its lowest. In the softly ambient light, his profile was outlined even more handsomely. His peaceful expression, framed by long lashes, made him look almost like a painting. Lin Feiran watched his sleeping face quietly, clutching the blanket's edge before carefully lying down.

Gu Kaifeng was close to the edge, his sturdy figure a stark contrast to Lin Feiran's slender one, leaving a small gap between them. Lin Feiran cautiously moved his leg closer until it touched Gu Kaifeng's, seeking reassurance through this slight contact.

Lin Feiran was petrified of ghosts, but even without that fear, he couldn't shake off the unnerving thought of ghosts partying in their dorm in the middle of the night.

However, as soon as Lin Feiran brushed against Gu Kaifeng's calf, Gu Kaifeng reflexively drew his leg up, making it unreachable.

*Did he do that on purpose?* Lin Feiran wondered, his unease growing as he halted his movements. To test if Gu Kaifeng was awake, he waved his hand in front of his face. There was no response. Not even a twitch of his eyebrows.

Feeling a bit more confident, Lin Feiran bent out his arm, brushing his elbow against Gu Kaifeng's arm. He felt a bit more at ease from the warmth of Gu Kaifeng's body. But Gu Kaifeng, perhaps disturbed in his sleep, raised his hand to scratch his nose, breaking the contact.

*Is he really asleep or is he screwing with me?* Puzzled, Lin Feiran sat up and leaned in, like a ghost, inches from Gu Kaifeng's face, staring ominously.

Gu Kaifeng seemed deep asleep, his breathing steady and un-

disturbed.

Left with no other option, Lin Feiran laid back down and waited a good while. Then, under the cover of darkness, he cautiously nudged closer to Gu Kaifeng, brushing his left shoulder against Gu Kaifeng's right shoulder. Just as he started to relax, Gu Kaifeng turned to his side to face him, and again, physical contact was lost.

Lin Feiran let out a frustrated whisper, "Gu Kaifeng?"

No answer came.

"Are you asleep?" Lin Feiran gritted out.

Still only silence.

Taking the risk of being sent back to his upper bunk, Lin Feiran grumbled under his breath, "Agh... Gu Kaifeng, you're such an idiot."

Gu Kaifeng's face in sleep remained perfectly peaceful, showing not even the slightest hint of unrest. *Fantastic! Fast asleep like a baby!* Lin Feiran, ever so simple and petty, quickly wrapped an arm around Gu Kaifeng's slender waist and draped his leg over Gu Kaifeng's, hugging him tightly like a koala to a tree. Gu Kaifeng remained sound asleep as if dead to the world while Lin Feiran arranged his limbs to wrap around him as he pleased.

Feeling triumphant, Lin Feiran snuggled closer. *You're not going anywhere now. My ghost-proof shield!* he thought, a sense of victory washing over him.

Along with the three eerie events of the night, Lin Feiran felt like he had endured enough turmoil today. He let himself gradually relax in the presence of Gu Kaifeng next to him, easing the lingering chill. Wrapped in this newfound comfort, Lin Feiran

soon fell asleep.

# Chapter 03

Lin Feiran woke up the next morning and immediately checked the clock. It was 6:10 a.m. Sunlight filtered through the curtains, filling the room with a warm glow, and the sounds of birds and distant student chatter drifted in from outside. For a moment, he wondered if the events of the previous night were just a dream.

As Lin Feiran felt Gu Kaifeng shift beside him, he became acutely aware of how close they had slept. Realizing their proximity and the natural morning responses of two teenage boys, his cheeks flushed. It was normal for their age, but the fact that he was still in Gu Kaifeng's arms and their erect parts were touching under the covers added an intimate and gay kind of romance to the morning air.

Carefully, he moved Gu Kaifeng's arm away from his waist, pressed himself against the wall, and nudged him awake. "Time to get up. It's six ten."

Gu Kaifeng opened his eyes immediately. His eyes were

bright and alert, showing no signs of fatigue or drowsiness. His gaze fell on Lin Feiran's face as if he had been waiting for this moment.

"Morning." Gu Kaifeng sat up. Taking notice of Lin Feiran's awkward position, he asked, "Did you sleep against the wall all night?"

Trying to sound nonchalant, Lin Feiran lied, "I don't know, maybe. I am a good sleeper."

Gu Kaifeng dipped his head, a fleeting smile starting to curl on his lips before he quickly smoothed it away. Lifting his gaze once more, he wore an unassailable mask of calm. "How's your cold?"

"I'm all good now," Lin Feiran said as he stretched. He felt fine this morning, refreshed even.

"Let's get ready for breakfast before class." Gu Kaifeng nodded before getting up to freshen up. Lin Feiran, meanwhile, plugged in his dead phone to charge before doing the same.

The common wash station was bustling at this hour with hardly any free space. On Gu Kaifeng's side, every water tap was in use, so Lin Feiran found an open spot across from him. While he was washing his face and brushing his teeth, he couldn't shake off the nagging fear of encountering ghosts.

Students groomed themselves using the long mirror that sat above each row of taps. With the toothbrush still in his mouth, he stole a glance at Gu Kaifeng through the mirror to check if his human shield was still there.

To his astonishment, he caught Gu Kaifeng's eyes in the mirror. Their reflections locked gazes. Gu Kaifeng, with his mouth

covered in white toothpaste foam, playfully winked at him.

Startled, Lin Feiran felt a wave of emotion wash over him. His hand shook, sending his cup clattering into the sink. As he quickly reached for it, that familiar chill crept up on him again. Suddenly, the running water in the sink turned into thick, red blood. In the distorted reflection in the sink, a bloated, ghostly figure appeared. Its long, dark hair mingled with the bloody water, undulating like seaweed. As Lin Feiran watched, trembling, his cup innocently passed through the ghost from head to toe.

Meanwhile, the water ghost stretched out with a yawn, its rotten mouth gaping wide before lazily rolling over in the sink and casually scratching its backside. It seemed like it was just taking a nap!

Lin Feiran froze. *I'm never using this cup again!*

Having been spooked three times since yesterday, he has somewhat braced himself for these jump scares. He managed to suppress a scream, not wanting to alarm his classmates. His face was pale as he searched for Gu Kaifeng, seeking comfort in his presence. Just then, Gu Kaifeng finished brushing his teeth, spat out the toothpaste, and washed his face. When he looked up, his face would catch the light. Water droplets sparkled on his chiselled features, making him look like he'd stepped out of a skincare ad.

A group of ghostly girls, with their pale faces and tousled hair, hovered around Gu Kaifeng, excitedly fussing over him and exclaiming, "Oh my god, I want to have a ghost baby with you!" One particularly bold ghost girl, taking advantage of the fact he's unaware, reached out cheekily to stroke his abs.

Though terrified to the point of tears, Lin Feiran couldn't

help but feel a twinge of envy.

*Why do even ghost girls flock to Gu Kaifeng? Am I really that much less attractive than him?!*

Lin Feiran had been thinking about approaching Gu Kaifeng to turn off his Yin-yang Eye. But then he remembered wondering if anyone else could do the same. Fighting the urge to run to Gu Kaifeng, he playfully tousled the hair of the chubby boy standing to his left instead.

The chubby boy looked at him, confused.

After an awkward pause, Lin Feiran said, "Good morning."

But his efforts seemed futile! The water ghost in the sink, now even more grotesquely decayed, started snoring loudly.

Not ready to give up, he reached out and patted the shoulder of the lanky boy on his right, his voice shaking a bit. "Good morning."

The lanky boy, groggy and half-asleep, just nodded. "Morning."

Yet his Yin-yang Eye ability was still active!

Despair and anxiety began to overwhelm Lin Feiran, pushing him to the edge. He darted from one boy to another, all of them busy in their routine at the sinks. They're all familiar faces—classmates or peers from the same graduating class. But even as they shot Lin Feiran puzzled glances, he pressed on frantically, tapping shoulders and murmuring a "good morning" tinged with desperation. Seven attempts, and still, nothing changed!

*Seriously? Is it only Gu Kaifeng who can shut off my Yin-yang Eye? Great, just great. How am I even supposed to deal with it?!*

Lin Feiran's thoughts were a desperate shout, echoing in the silence of his mind.

Then, Gu Kaifeng, freshly washed, began walking towards him with determined strides. For some reason, Gu Kaifeng's approach felt a bit intimidating. Taken aback, he widened his eyes innocently in alarm, taking in both Gu Kaifeng and the four ghostly girls trailing eagerly behind him. "Wh-what's up?"

Gu Kaifeng took Lin Feiran's restless hands in his and, in a deep and steady voice, said, "What's going on with you?"

As soon as Lin Feiran touched him, the spooky visions disappeared. Lin Feiran let out a sigh of relief and then looked around. Trying to sound nonchalant, he responded, "Just saying good morning to everyone, what's wrong with that?"

Gu Kaifeng's smile was perfectly poised like he was wearing an impeccable mask. "Nothing at all. You done with the greetings?"

Lin Feiran nodded quickly. "Yeah."

Gu Kaifeng glanced at the sink, picked up the cup that had been washed to the corner, and thoroughly cleaned it under the tap. Handing it back to Lin Feiran, who still sported a bit of toothpaste on his face, he said, "Rinse your mouth."

Holding the cup that had passed through the water ghost, Lin Feiran was flooded with mixed emotions. He went back to his spot, placed the cup in the basin, scooped up some water with his hands and started rinsing his mouth. During this, he began piecing together details from his previous three experiences with his Yin-yang Eye.

In each of those moments, he had instinctively turned to Gu Kaifeng, his heart racing with terror whenever his Yin-yang Eye awakened. Overwhelmed by fear, he had missed something important. With it active, he realized he could see more than just

ghosts, he could also see the auras around people. These auras were faint, like soft halos varying in brightness and colour, most had a white tinge or were slightly blue. But Gu Kaifeng's aura was different—it radiated a soft golden light.

He thought back to just moments earlier when Gu Kaifeng got closer: there was smoke emitting from the four ghostly girls circling Gu Kaifeng. He even noticed their thin hands touching Gu Kaifeng seemed to dissolve as if corroded by acid, revealing a dark, sinister red underneath. However, the ghosts showed no signs of pain.

He wondered if they were numb to the pain or if they saw it as a worthwhile trade-off for the chance to be near someone as attractive as Gu Kaifeng.

He also remembered touching the shoulders of those seven boys, seeing his own hand and arm shrouded in a grey-black aura, like fumes from a chemical plant. But the moment Gu Kaifeng's hand clasped his wrist, warm energy seemed to flow into him, chasing away the chilling sensation that usually came with his Yin-yang Eye. This warmth was subtle, easily overlooked unless one was particularly sensitive to such slight changes. He speculated it could be some kind of yang energy,[3] varying in strength and seemingly repulsive to ghosts. After rinsing his mouth and drying his face, Lin Feiran couldn't shake off his frustration about his own aura.

*Why am I oozing black smoke like this? No wonder I keep see-*

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3 yang energy : also known as primal energy, it signifies the life force of living beings, encapsulating a positive and constructive vitality. This contrasts with "yin energy", which is characterized by qualities like darkness and cold.

*ing ghosts. My yang energy must be dangerously low, right?*

After finishing his morning routine, Lin Feiran glanced towards the entrance and noticed Gu Kaifeng leaning casually against the doorframe, seemingly waiting for him. With one hand in his pocket and the other holding a basin, his dark eyes observed Lin Feiran expectantly.

"I'm all set." Lin Feiran was feeling a bit awkward as he walked over. "Shall we head to the canteen?"

*Gosh, just two days ago he was my arch-rival! Do I really have to stick to him like glue now?!* Lin Feiran thought, a mix of one-sided sadness and frustration stirring within him.

Gu Kaifeng, who had never really considered Lin Feiran to be a rival, simply replied, "Sure, let's go."

Just then, Gu Kaifeng's deskmate, Wang Zhuo, hurried into the common wash station with his basin in hand. He playfully slapped Gu Kaifeng on the back, saying, "Kaifeng, wait five minutes for me. Let's grab breakfast together."

Gu Kaifeng, now suddenly valued his time, replied without hesitation, "I can't wait. We're nearly late as it is."

As Wang Zhuo hurriedly squeezed out his toothpaste, he called out to Gu Kaifeng's departing figure, "Then at least grab me a Tianjin crepe for class!"

Gu Kaifeng raised his hand in acknowledgement. As he lowered it, he casually ruffled Lin Feiran's hair, smoothing out a cowlick.

Wang Zhuo watched them leave, feeling a bit left out. *Gu Kaifeng had dismissed Lin Feiran as a little silly goose just a few days ago, how come they are so close today?*

They scarfed down their breakfast in the canteen and headed to the morning study session.

On the way, Lin Feiran would "accidentally" bump into Gu Kaifeng, using these touches to ward off his Yin-yang Eye. But once they were in the classroom, he faced a new challenge: Gu Kaifeng sat at the back while he was in the third-to-last row. Close yet separate by an aisle, it will be hard to maintain reassuring physical contact.

Sitting down, Lin Feiran felt uneasy. He found himself repeatedly glancing back at Gu Kaifeng, his human shield. Just seeing him provided some comfort, even if he couldn't touch him.

Gu Kaifeng, deeply focused on memorizing vocabulary, seemed to have a sixth sense. Every time Lin Feiran looked his way, their eyes would meet, and Gu Kaifeng would flash a quick, enigmatic smile.

*Damn, why does his smile have to be so...so...* Lin Feiran whipped his head away, startled, like a rabbit caught in headlights. He fumbled for the right words to capture that smile but found none. Just a reminder that his struggle with words wasn't helping his poor essay-writing skills.

Anyway, that smile was something!

Shaking off the thought, he opened his math workbook and began tackling problems. But after only a couple of exercises, that familiar chill crept up from his feet to his eyes. Shivering, he braced himself mentally and stole cautious glances around the room, trying to stay inconspicuous.

He had hoped the presence of many people in the classroom would create a strong yang energy to keep the ghosts at bay. He

quickly realized how wrong he was.

Though there were fewer ghosts in the classroom compared to the dorm, their presence was still there, and somehow, they were even more horrible!

Lin Feiran's gaze first fell on an elderly gentleman dressed impeccably in a traditional Zhongshan suit. Half of his face showed a serene, kind expression, with a gentle smile touching the corner of his mouth. The silver hair on one side was neatly combed, shining as if freshly waxed. He only saw half of his appearance because the gentleman only had half of his head!

He must have been quite efficient with his hair wax, huh!

Lin Feiran thought and quickly looked down, a chill running down his spine and his mind tingling with fear. There was something familiar about the intact half of the gentleman's face. After a moment, recognition dawned—this was the renowned scholar and founder of their high school, Old Principal.

He had only known of Old Principal from the portrait in the school's main hall and had no idea how he had passed away.

Old Principal strolled down the aisle, hands clasped behind his back, observing the students with his remaining eye, exuding a sense of contentment. When he reached the desk of the class's top student, he paused, seemingly impressed by the student's problem-solving skills. He lifted his half-head, giving a thumbs-up of approval. Oblivious to this spectral commendation, the student worked on and focused.

Lin Feiran felt like he was on the edge of a breakdown and couldn't bear to watch any longer. He rested his forehead on his hand, pretending to be asleep.

But as soon as he feigned sleep, Old Principal's expression

turned serious, and he walked towards Lin Feiran. Just seconds after he closed his eyes, an old, authoritative voice, tinged with disapproval, rang in his ears, "Wake up, young man! Is this a place for you to sleep?"

Lin Feiran's heart skipped a beat at the sound, sensing trouble brewing.

*Damn it! It seems like I've touched a nerve!*

Despite everything, Lin Feiran found the horror of hearing ghostly whispers slightly less terrifying than actually seeing them. So, with a clenched jaw and steeling his heart against his fear, he kept his eyes tightly shut, determined to not look!

Old Principal continued to stand beside him, relentlessly scolding Lin Feiran for wasting time and not studying hard enough. His half-face twisted with disappointment and disdain. Seeing Lin Feiran still squeeze his eyes shut and show no remorse, Old Principal reached out and gave Lin Feiran a shove. His ghostly arm passed right through Lin Feiran's back and out his chest.

Lin Feiran had naively thought ghostly encounters were limited to sight and sound. He never imagined they could include touch. It wasn't a solid, physical contact; it was more like a chilling energy penetrating his core. Suddenly, he felt the warmth in his upper body being drained away as if he'd been plunged into a frozen lake. His blood seemed to ice over, stopping cold. His heart lost its rhythm, turning sluggish. Goosebumps spread rapidly from his back to his forearms. He bit his lip, a soft groan escaping him. Luckily, except for a curious look from his deskmate, no one else seemed to notice.

The intensity of this cold was so severe that he suspected it

was a side effect of his Yin-yang Eye. If ordinary people experienced this cold upon ghostly contact, Gu Kaifeng wouldn't have been so nonchalant about the ghost girls touching him in the wash station earlier.

Unable to bear another icy touch, Lin Feiran hesitantly and fearfully opened his eyes. As he looked down at his workbook, tears brimming, his hands trembled too much for him to write. Old Principal still stood by his side, his half-face stern, oblivious to the fright he just caused. Clearly, he mistook Lin Feiran for a misbehaving student needing extra guidance.

Lin Feiran, with cold sweat on his forehead, felt a desperate urge to move closer to Gu Kaifeng. However, Old Principal was standing firmly in the aisle to his right, effectively blocking his path. To his left was his deskmate with the classroom wall just beyond. His options were limited: he could either try to pass through Old Principal or awkwardly clamber over the desk behind him. But he feared the latter might anger the ghost even more...

After a moment's hesitation, Lin Feiran decided to stay put. He gritted his teeth and focused hard on his workbook, mentally reciting Amitabha for some semblance of peace. Old Principal, noting Lin Feiran's renewed attention to his studies, gave a loud snort and ceased his lecturing, but he remained nearby. The silent standoff between Lin Feiran and the ghost lasted until Ms Zheng arrived to start the English class. At that point, Old Principal drifted away from Lin Feiran and went back to hovering around the class's top student, his half-face displaying a look of approval as the student opened his English notebook.

Wiping away his tears of fear, Lin Feiran raised his hand and

asked, "Ms Zheng, may I stand at the back for a bit?"

It was a common practice in their class. Given their intense high school workload and late-night studying, students often felt exhausted during the day. To prevent themselves from falling asleep, they were allowed to stand at the back of the room to stay alert during lessons.

With Ms Zheng's nod of permission, Lin Feiran quickly gathered his book and pen and made his way to the back of the classroom. Once there, he positioned himself next to Gu Kaifeng. As Ms Zheng turned to write on the board, he made his move. He reached out and touched Gu Kaifeng's shoulder, seeking comfort and safety in the contact.

Gu Kaifeng reacted with lightning speed, swiftly catching hold of Lin Feiran's hand.

In a hushed whisper, Lin Feiran muttered, "Stop fooling around."

Gu Kaifeng playfully squeezed Lin Feiran's slender, pale fingers, whispering back, "You started it."

Flushing, Lin Feiran withdrew his hand quietly.

*Hmm, there is something undeniably odd about this whole situation!*

During the forty-minute English class, Lin Feiran stood in the aisle by the last row. He managed to touch Gu Kaifeng eight times. Trying not to seem weird, he made each touch as discreet as the note-passing techniques he had mastered in elementary school. Each touch was brief and light, so much so that after the first one, Gu Kaifeng didn't appear to notice them at all. He gave himself a mental pat on the back, thinking he had executed

his secret mission with impressive skill.

*I moved just like a ninja*, Lin Feiran thought to himself, feeling quite pleased.

But as the dismissal bell rang and Ms Zheng left the room, Gu Kaifeng suddenly stood up, pressed Lin Feiran's shoulder and cornered him against the wall.

Lin Feiran shrank back in fear. *Is he going to punch me?*

Gu Kaifeng leaned, his gaze dropping to Lin Feiran's nervously shifting eyes. In a low voice, he asked, "You touched me a total of eight times during class. What's that about?"

Lin Feiran's face fell, completely stunned.

*Are you kidding me? You actually counted?!*

A hint of a smirk played at the corner of Gu Kaifeng's mouth as he said softly, "Your hands seem to have a mind of their own. Looking to tease me again?"

Despite the flirtatious undertone in Gu Kaifeng's voice, Lin Feiran, who saw himself as straight, misinterpreted the comment as a typical macho challenge. Imagining himself in Gu Kaifeng's shoes, he realized he would have been annoyed if another guy had come over, stood next to him, and touched him repeatedly in class. Quickly, Lin Feiran waved his hand, trying to smooth things over. "I won't do it again."

Lin Feiran had lost the nerve to challenge Gu Kaifeng. Driven by his fear, he just wanted to stay near his protective human shield!

Gu Kaifeng seemed slightly disappointed. "Really? No more teasing?"

Lin Feiran nodded, uncertainty lacing his voice. "No."

After a pause, his face scrunched up in worry. He quickly

added, "Well, not during this break. But for the next class... I can't make any promises..."

Gu Kaifeng was amused. "You..."

Seizing the opportunity when Gu Kaifeng relaxed his hold, Lin Feiran darted back to his seat like a rabbit, settling down without daring to look back. His ears were flaming red.

*I don't want to be this shameless either, but ghosts are just too terrifying!*

Lin Feiran had an especially difficult day. He spent the whole morning standing in the aisle near the back row, trying his best to maintain contact with Gu Kaifeng through carefully executed touches. As the morning progressed, his legs grew tired, and the aching discomfort set in. To make matters more complicated, the usually aloof Gu Kaifeng had begun teasing him after every class, leaving him bewildered and unsure of Gu Kaifeng's intentions. He grew increasingly anxious with every word Gu Kaifeng uttered.

As a result, Lin Feiran decided to muster his courage and return to his own seat for the afternoon classes. He kept his attention firmly on the blackboard and his textbook or simply closed his eyes, shutting out everything around him.

The reason he felt brave enough to go back to his seat was the absence of Old Principal. After leaving during the second class of the morning to check on the other classes, he didn't come back. Without Old Principal's presence, the classroom's level of scariness became somewhat bearable. Sure, there was a bleeding ghost hanging from the projector, a ghostly face peeking through the small window in the back door, a few ghosts

lounging in the aisle, and a top-student ghost who liked to play pranks, but there weren't many others.

These ghosts were slightly less intimidating than the half-headed Old Principle. At least they didn't force Lin Feiran to keep his eyes wide open.

There was one ghost who stood out particularly: the top-student ghost. His appearance was haunting with an unnaturally elongated tongue, bulging eyes that seemed to roll wildly, and a swollen, liver-coloured face that looked like it was on the verge of bursting. Unlike Old Principle who hovered around high achievers, this one took delight in tormenting the underperformers.

Zhang Xu, Lin Feiran's deskmate who had the unfortunate distinction of being the last in their class in the previous exam, was his primary target. The ghost clung to his back throughout the class, tactically retracting his tongue that hung over his head whenever he started his taunting.

"You're a fool, aren't you?" the ghost scolded, slapping Zhang Xu's head. "Such a simple problem! Just use the method from Example 3, you dolt!"

Oblivious to the ghostly harassment yet feeling something amiss, Zhang Xu scratched his head, gazing at his workbook with a blend of confusion and frustration.

Lin Feiran, too scared to even look around, sat in silence, his face drained of colour.

The ghost rhythmically hit on Zhang Xu's head like playing

the drum. "Remember, odds change, evens remain;[4] then watch the signs in each quadrant, you numbskull."

With a look of disdain, as if Zhang Xu had let him down, the ghost mused bitterly, "In my father's words, 'I've raised you for years for nothing. You can't even earn a scholarship? If I were you, I'd rather be dead!'" Imitating his father, he added, "How did I end up with such a useless son?"

At that moment, Lin Feiran realized why the ghost had chosen to hang himself. A wave of sympathy swept over him, and he couldn't help but glance at the top-student ghost. However, the sight of the red tongue swinging in front of Zhang Xu's face quickly turned his sympathy into a fresh wave of fear.

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4 Odds change, evens remain: A mathematical mnemonic. It refers to the parameter "k". If "k" is odd, sine changes to cosine, and cosine changes to sine. In contrast, if "k" is even, the original sine and cosine nature of the function remains the same.

# Chapter 04

Lin Feiran spent the day in a state of jittery apprehension, barely making it through.

He was deeply aware that this situation couldn't continue. If he carried on and remained distracted during class, he would soon fall behind Zhang Xu and end up at the bottom of the class. Sooner or later, he would become the "top student" ghost's daily target of mockery.

*If only I could sit next to Gu Kaifeng.* Lin Feiran thought, *out of sight, out of mind. He has such strong yang energy. Besides the few ghostly fangirls, other ghosts dared not to bother him out of boredom.*

Lin Feiran sat at his desk back in the dorm, lost in thought. He idly twirled his pen, expression vacant. His big eyes stared blankly at the pen in his hand, his long, dark lashes drooped, and the workbook that laid before him remained untouched. He was too preoccupied with worries.

The study desk in the dorm comprised of two small tables

put together, located opposite the beds, with Lin Feiran on the left and Gu Kaifeng on the right.

Gu Kaifeng, propping his cheek on one hand, casually turned to observe Lin Feiran. After watching him for a while, he cleared his throat lightly. However, Lin Feiran was so absorbed in his thoughts that he didn't notice. He rested his chin in his hand and sighed, a deep melancholy painted across his face as he continued to mull over his concerns.

Upon further reflection, Lin Feiran considered that having the ability to see ghosts might not be entirely negative. Perhaps, he could see his grandpa again. *Would Grandpa be at the ancestral home or the graveyard? And what about Grandma? Would they be together?*

Lin Feiran's thoughts drifted back to his grandpa, whose stoic response to his grandma's death had always puzzled him. He was quite young back then, and those distant memories had grown hazy with time. Yet, he vividly recalled his grandpa's calm demeanour at the funeral. At the time, Lin Feiran had felt confused, having expected the grief to be tearful as often depicted on TV. But afterwards, his grandpa began to talk to himself in the quiet corners of the house, sometimes even chuckling during these solitary conversations. Everyone rationalized it as his way of coping with the loss of his lifelong partner. They said that despite his composed facade, he must have been grieving deeply inside.

Lin Feiran wondered if his grandpa might have been able to see his grandma's spirit. *Maybe they had been together all these years at the ancestral home?*

Observing Lin Feiran's thoughtful expression, Gu Kaifeng

playfully nudged Lin Feiran's shoe with his own, teasingly breaking the silence, "Hey, Lin Feiran."

Caught up in his thoughts, Lin Feiran didn't take notice of the gentle tap on his foot at first. But as the idea of reuniting with his grandpa took hold, a sense of hope began to lift his spirits. A smile slowly crept across his face, replacing the previous gloom. The sorrow in his eyes gave way to a newfound brightness, lighting up his whole expression.

Gu Kaifeng's eyes crinkled with amusement as he nudged Lin Feiran's shoe again. "Hey, I'm talking to you," he said, voice heavy with affection and a hint of playful impatience.

Lin Feiran, slightly startled, turned towards him. "What is it?"

"You were smiling to yourself just now," Gu Kaifeng said with a smirk. "What's got you so happy?"

Lin Feiran, caught off guard by his own expression, raised a hand to his cheek, feeling puzzled. "Was I?"

Gu Kaifeng chuckled. "Sure, keep pretending."

Lin Feiran was perplexed. *Huh? Had he lost his mind?*

Trying not to stir any tension with Gu Kaifeng, he took a deep breath and held back his annoyance.

He had also considered whether he could subtly hint at the presence of ghosts to Gu Kaifeng through his reactions earlier today, but he doubted they had that kind of telepathic communication. Moreover, the idea of telling his parents, who were both firm sceptics, was out of the question. They'll probably think he'd lost his mind and suggest psychiatric treatment as their solution. That would make explaining everything even harder. Therefore, for the time being, he decided to shelve those

risky thoughts.

Lin Feiran contemplated visiting his ancestral home in the countryside. If his grandpa's spirit was there, maybe he could find some answers about living with his Yin-yang Eye. But the thought of encountering ghosts on the journey gave him the chills. Not to mention, asking Gu Kaifeng to join him was out of the question; they weren't even that close yet.

Resting his chin in his hand, Lin Feiran glanced at Gu Kaifeng out of the corner of his eye, then he quickly looked away, lost in thought.

*No way he would agree to go to my hometown with me. We just aren't close enough for that kind of favour.*

As Lin Feiran looked away, Gu Kaifeng also took the opportunity to steal a glance at him. Noting Lin Feiran's anxious and hesitant expression, a subtle smile involuntarily crept onto Gu Kaifeng's lips.

Soon, it was time for lights out.

Lin Feiran's nerves kicked into overdrive as the lights went off. He quickly turned on his reading lamp and followed Gu Kaifeng to the bathroom, glued to him like a little sticky rice cake. His actions tonight were unusually swift. By the time Gu Kaifeng finished washing up, Lin Feiran was already done. As they completed their nightly routines, he lightly brushed a hand to Gu Kaifeng's back and said, "I'm finished. Heading back now." Without even waiting for a reply, he rushed back to their dorm room.

Back in the room now, Lin Feiran hurriedly changed into his pyjamas and marked his territory. He swapped their reading lights, placing Gu Kaifeng's lamp on his desk and moving his

own to Gu Kaifeng's bedside. Then, he grabbed his pillow from the top bunk and squeezed it onto Gu Kaifeng's bed, making room for two. Without a second thought, he climbed into Gu Kaifeng's bed, tucked himself under the covers, and pretended to read a book.

He did all this because the idea of a seventeen-year-old being too scared to sleep alone for a second night in a row because of nightmares seemed ridiculous. But he lacked a better excuse to justify sharing Gu Kaifeng's bed every night, so he had to create a scenario that made his presence there seem normal. He could only hope that Gu Kaifeng would find it too awkward to object.

When Gu Kaifeng returned to the room with his basin, Lin Feiran was caught by surprise. He quickly sat up in the lower bunk, trying to appear as though he belonged there. He adjusted the covers with one hand and fluffed the pillows with the other, masking his anxiety under Gu Kaifeng's unreadable stare. Feigning indifference, he casually remarked, "Time for bed. It's late."

Gu Kaifeng paused, taking in the scene with a puzzled look. After a moment, he climbed into bed, his expression inscrutable.

Lin Feiran, feeling tense and worried that Gu Kaifeng might question their shared sleeping arrangement, pretended to be absorbed in his book. His nervousness, however, was obvious. He flipped the pages too quickly while staring at the centre of his book.

Gu Kaifeng, lying on his pillow, seemed relaxed as he idly scrolled through his phone. However, he kept stealing glances at Lin Feiran from the corner of his eye.

After pretending to read for a while and noticing Gu Kai-

feng's continued silence, Lin Feiran relaxed a bit. He closed the book and slid it under his pillow. After laying down and settling in under the blanket, he uttered as casually as he could, "I'm off to sleep."

A hint of amusement flickered in Gu Kaifeng's eyes as he softly replied, "Mm."

Lin Feiran quickly closed his eyes and discreetly bent his knee, gently touching it against Gu Kaifeng's thigh. To his relief, Gu Kaifeng didn't pull away, and the spot where they touched slowly warmed up. Lin Feiran couldn't help but praise himself with a smug smile. *My "Pretend It's Only Natural to Sleep Together" plan is working perfectly. I must be a natural at reading people!*

Gu Kaifeng glanced down at the young man beside him, taking note of Lin Feiran's small movements, like the gentle nudge of his knee and the faint smile on his lips while his eyes remained closed. These actions stirred a complex mix of emotions in Gu Kaifeng.

Taking a deep breath, he dimmed the reading light to its lowest setting and settled in for the night.

With his human shield close by, Lin Feiran slept peacefully, free from any dreams. He woke up looking refreshed and radiant, his features even more striking in the morning light. Gu Kaifeng, on the other hand, had faint dark circles under his eyes, giving him a slightly weary yet still captivating appearance.

It seemed as if Lin Feiran was a sprightly fox spirit full of yang energy from poor Gu Kaifeng, who was now left with just a husk of himself.

Lin Feiran poked Gu Kaifeng awkwardly, his concern evident. "Did you sleep okay last night?"

Gu Kaifeng yawned and replied casually, "Yeah, it was fine."

Despite Gu Kaifeng's nonchalant response, Lin Feiran still felt uneasy. Eager to keep their shared sleeping arrangement going, he asked anxiously, "I didn't disturb your sleep, did I?"

Gu Kaifeng looked at his innocent expression, feeling a tangled mix of affection and irritation. He gritted his teeth slightly and answered, "No, you didn't."

After getting ready, Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng made their way to the canteen for breakfast. Once they finished, Gu Kaifeng grabbed a can of strong coffee and drank it quickly as they walked to their first class.

Feeling a bit guilty, Lin Feiran softly tapped Gu Kaifeng, and cautiously asked again, "Are you sure I didn't disturb your sleep last night?"

Gu Kaifeng shook his head and casually tossed the empty can into a trash bin from a distance. "No, I just stayed up too late on my phone," he said, giving Lin Feiran a reassuring glance.

Lin Feiran, the simple-minded straight guy he was, felt a sense of relief.

With the shared sleeping arrangement sorted out, he now turned his attention to the next issue: their seating arrangement in class. Continually standing at the back wasn't a viable long-term plan.

So, right after the morning's first class, Lin Feiran hurried to Ms Zheng's office to discuss this matter.

Ms Zheng, their form teacher, a forty-something-year-old mother to an elementary school son, was known for her strict demeanour and lack of smiles. However, she was highly dedicat-

ed and responsible, commanding a mix of respect and fear from her students. As Lin Feiran walked into her office, he found her deeply focused on grading homework from the morning's study session. Nearby, the chemistry teacher was instructing another student to fetch two classmates to help move some workbooks.

Ms Zheng looked up as Lin Feiran approached. "What do you need?" she asked.

Swallowing nervously, Lin Feiran said, "Ms Zheng, I'd like to change my seat."

"Where do you want to move to?" Her brows knitted slightly.

"I was hoping to switch seats with Wang Zhuo."

Ms Zheng paused and remembered that Lin Feiran's current seatmate, Zhang Xu, was at the bottom of their class rankings. "Is Zhang Xu distracting you?" she probed.

"No, it's not that," Lin Feiran quickly replied. *Well, the ghost haunting Zhang Xu was indeed distracting.*

"What's the reason for the switch then?" Ms Zheng pressed.

Behind Lin Feiran, the sound of footsteps grew louder as the boys came to help the chemistry teacher. Without turning around, Lin Feiran presented his readied excuse. "My Language Arts grades are slipping, and Gu Kaifeng is really good at it. I thought maybe I could learn from him."

"Have you talked to Gu Kaifeng about this?" Ms Zheng inquired.

Pretending to be earnest, Lin Feiran nodded. "Yes, we've discussed it. He's agreed to help me after school."

In truth, they hadn't discussed it at all. Lin Feiran hoped to create the impression that the seat change was Ms Zheng's idea

and planned to act surprised once they were seated together.

He had been sticking close to Gu Kaifeng lately—sharing a bed, going to the bathroom together, eating meals together, and now, asking to be desk mates. He couldn't help feeling like he was overdoing it, as if he was behaving like a psychopath. The thought of Gu Kaifeng discovering his desire to switch seats made him cringe with awkwardness.

Just as he was wrestling with these thoughts, a cheerful voice suddenly interrupted, "Ms Zheng, Feiran and I have already talked about it. Could we switch seats, please?"

Lin Feiran nearly jumped out of his skin at the unexpected voice.

"Uh, well..." Lin Feiran stammered, turning his head sharply to see Gu Kaifeng standing there, holding a stack of chemistry workbooks with a solemn look on his face. Behind him, Wang Zhuo was carrying another pile, smirking playfully.

Lin Feiran was speechless. *Damn, why didn't I check behind me?!*

Gu Kaifeng persisted, "Ms Zheng, I'd really like to help Feiran with his studies."

Lin Feiran couldn't shake the feeling that Gu Kaifeng had put a little too much emphasis on the word "help."

He felt anything he did was a joke at this point, so he just stood there, sweating with embarrassment and unsure whether he should confirm or deny Gu Kaifeng's words.

Ms Zheng nodded thoughtfully. "Okay, I'll think about it. You boys better head back to class now."

Thanks to his father's generous donation to the school, Gu Kaifeng was automatically on the good side of the faculty. His

requests, as long as they were within the school's rules, were generally met with little resistance. Even his preference for not having a roommate had been easily accommodated. So something like changing his seatmate seemed like it would be no big deal.

Gu Kaifeng flashed a charming, bright smile. "Okay, Ms Zheng. We're heading back now. See you."

Lin Feiran, caught in a rather awkward situation, felt his cheeks heat up. He hesitated, hoping Gu Kaifeng would leave first. He glanced around, trying to buy some time.

But then, that familiar cold sensation washed over him. Startled, Lin Feiran looked down, unprepared for what he was about to see.

The sight caught Lin Feiran so off guard that he nearly leapt to his feet right in front of Ms Zheng!

There was a little girl under Ms Zheng's desk. She was around five or six years old, with sweet features that must have been quite endearing while she was alive—big, innocent eyes, a small nose, and a mouth like a doll's. Her paleness and the eerie blood trickling from her nose and mouth were the only signs that something was amiss.

She was dressed in a long pink dress, crawling on the floor, and gently hugging Ms Zheng's legs. Her lips curved slightly upwards, a sign of contentment, while Ms Zheng remained completely oblivious to her presence.

*Could it be...?* Lin Feiran's face drained of colour and his skin was covered with goosebumps. He opened his mouth about to say something to Ms Zheng, but just then, Gu Kaifeng nudged him lightly and whispered, "Let's go."

As soon as Gu Kaifeng touched him, the chilling vision dis-

appeared. Under the desk, there was nothing but an ordinary waste bin.

Gu Kaifeng and Wang Zhuo left the office, laughing and joking, with Lin Feiran trailing behind, still preoccupied with the image of the little ghost girl. Her tender mannerisms lingered in his mind.

As they made their way through the corridor, Wang Zhuo playfully nudged Gu Kaifeng's leg with his foot. "Really, dude? Ditching me just like that? You playboy." he teased.

Gu Kaifeng shot him a sideways glance and chuckled, "Better start packing your stuff, buddy."

Wang Zhuo dramatically shook his head. "Tsk, tsk, tsk. Out with the old, and in with the new. How typical."

Lin Feiran, still reeling from the appearance of that little ghost girl, found himself caught in the middle of their banter. The embarrassment he had momentarily forgotten came rushing back and made him too self-conscious to even look up.

Catching Lin Feiran's reaction, Gu Kaifeng, following Wang Zhuo's joke, leaned in and whispered, "Hey, my new beloved."

Lin Feiran's eyes widened in alarm. "Stop that nonsense."

Gu Kaifeng just smirked and walked ahead into the classroom. He dropped the chemistry workbooks on the class representative's desk and made his way to the back of the room. Meanwhile, Wang Zhuo was busy clearing out his desk, tossing trash into the bin near the door, so he could make it nice and ready for Lin Feiran.

Lin Feiran felt his ears turn red-hot with embarrassment from the whole spectacle the two were making. *Why did I ask to switch seats this morning?! Why didn't I check behind me?!*

*Aaaaaah! I hate myself!*

Overwhelmed with awkwardness, Lin Feiran forced himself to stay seated during both second and third periods and fought the urge to hide in the back of the class.

Old Principal made his usual appearance right before fourth-period math class. His half-head was impeccably groomed, and the severed part revealed a bizarrely polished cross-section of his brain. As soon as he entered, his gaze found Lin Feiran. Lin Feiran's antics from yesterday, sleeping in class and chit-chatting in the back row, had clearly made a strong impression on Old Principal.

Lin Feiran's heart raced with anxiety, and he quickly looked down. But Old Principal was already walking towards him, each step firm and resolute.

In a moment of desperation, Lin Feiran got over his awkwardness and grabbed his math book and workbook, scrambling over to Gu Kaifeng before tapping his shoulder as if to start the new round of his "teasing".

Gu Kaifeng, joining in the fun, tickled Lin Feiran's ribs, sending him into uncontrollable laughter. Their commotion caught the math teacher's attention as she walked in, and she glanced at them sternly.

Gu Kaifeng, trying to hold back his own laughter, covered his face with his hand.

Lin Feiran was unable to see the ghost now, but he could imagine Old Principal standing before him, heart heavy with disapproval, lecturing him for his frivolous behaviour of running around and laughing during class. The thought made Lin

Feiran shiver with unease, and he instinctively edged closer to Gu Kaifeng for comfort.

During math class, Gu Kaifeng casually opened his workbook and quickly wrote something down. He then subtly slid the notebook towards Lin Feiran, tapping it with his fingers to draw Lin Feiran's attention.

Lin Feiran leaned in to read, feeling a pang of envy at Gu Kaifeng's neat handwriting: "You really want to sit next to me that badly? Even went to ask Ms Zheng?"

Flustered and at a loss for words, Lin Feiran took advantage of the teacher's momentary distraction. He grabbed the workbook and scribbled a hurried reply: "No! I wanted to do it because it's easier to play on my phone in the last row!" He quickly pushed it back towards Gu Kaifeng.

In his rush, his already bad handwriting turned into chaotic chicken scratches when he wrote without a desk. Gu Kaifeng leaned in, squinting at the words, and tried to make sense of the jumbled letters.

Lin Feiran, drowning in embarrassment, silently wished he could redo his response.

"What does this part mean?" Gu Kaifeng asked quietly, pointing to "I wanted to do it".

As the math teacher turned to the board, Lin Feiran leaned closer to Gu Kaifeng and whispered each word directly into his ear: "I... wanted... to... do it..."

Gu Kaifeng couldn't suppress a chuckle.

Wang Zhuo, with an expression of barely contained amusement, muttered a laugh and a cursed under his breath. "Damn,

really? You two need to stop."

Lin Feiran then realised what he had said! In a sudden, bold move, he stepped forcefully onto Gu Kaifeng's 15,000 RMB, limited-edition basketball shoes. Not content with just a stomp, he twisted his foot, grinding it into the shoes. He had momentarily forgotten his need to stay on good terms with his "human shield".

*Well, since I've already stepped on them, I might as well make it count. I've been wanting to do this for ages!* A smug grin crossed his face as he indulged in this small act of rebellion.

Gu Kaifeng, lips pressed together, didn't react with anger to Lin Feiran's antics. His eyes seemed to twinkle with amusement. His lack of response only emboldened Lin Feiran further, who only withdrew his foot when the math teacher finished writing on the blackboard and turned back to the class.

As the class dismissal bell rang, signalling lunch break, the math teacher quickly gathered her things and left the room. The students were just about to dash to the canteen as if it were a race when Ms Zheng popped her head in and announced, "Li Ze, you'll be moving seats."

Li Ze, who sat behind Zhang Xu near the back, listened as Ms Zheng explained the new arrangement. "Li Ze, take Lin Feiran's seat. Wang Zhuo, you'll move to where Li Ze was, and Lin Feiran, you're going to Wang Zhuo's spot. Switch during lunch, please." It was clear the change was so Wang Zhuo's tall frame wouldn't block others' view of the blackboard.

The three boys all nodded in agreement, responding with a simple "Got it."

*Yeah! No more standing during class!* Lin Feiran was thrilled with this arrangement and bounced back to his seat with obvious enthusiasm.

Watching Lin Feiran leap around with such joy, Gu Kaifeng was hit with a strong desire to grab this little sticky rice cake and give him a playful tousle just to satisfy his own fond amusement.

"Let's just swap the desks, Li Ze. It'll be faster," Lin Feiran quickly blurted out in excitement. He nudged Li Ze and looked at Wang Zhuo. "What do you think, Wang Zhuo? We can just move the desks."

Li Ze and Wang Zhuo both agreed, and they got to work. Their desks were individual square tables, so having a "desk mate" simply meant pushing two of these together.

Lin Feiran started to move his desk but quickly realized it was heavier than he thought. After a few steps, he dropped it with a loud thud. As he was gearing up for another try, the weight suddenly eased. Gu Kaifeng had come to help, handling the desk with ease.

Gu Kaifeng's rolled-up sleeves revealed his toned forearms, and Lin Feiran couldn't help but notice the way his muscles flexed as he moved, veins becoming more visible. Lin Feiran felt a strange sensation at the sight, but it was fleeting and hard to pinpoint.

"Come on, hurry up guys!" Gu Kaifeng said, shifting the desk towards the back row and nudging Wang Zhuo, who was blocking the way.

"Look at you in such a hurry. What, are you getting married?" Wang Zhuo jested as he started to move his own desk.

Gu Kaifeng, with a hint of mischief in his smile, played

along. "And if I am?"

"Hey!" Lin Feiran objected, feeling a bit flustered.

Wang Zhuo laughed, ignoring Lin Feiran's protests. "Love is Love, Embrace Diversity! Wishing you guys a lifetime of love and joy!"

"Hey, hey!" Lin Feiran's protest grew louder.

"Thanks." Gu Kaifeng was clearly amused.

"Hey, hey, hey!" Lin Feiran blurted out, his face turning red.

Seeing Lin Feiran's obvious discomfort, Wang Zhuo stopped and reassured him, "Just joking, bro."

Lin Feiran fell silent. He knew that guys often joked around about anything and everything. It was just some harmless banter among friends with no malicious intent. To make a big deal out of it would only seem odd. Still, he couldn't shake off the weird feeling he had. Finally, he strained out an "I know" laced with frustration.

After they switched seats, Lin Feiran headed back to his old spot to grab his backpack. He turned to Zhang Xu and waved. "I'm off, see you later."

Zhang Xu, somewhat distracted, waved back. "Yeah, bye."

Before leaving, Lin Feiran hesitated and then looked at Zhang Xu with genuine concern. "You should take your studies more seriously," he said earnestly.

Lin Feiran couldn't help but worry about the ghost that haunted Zhang Xu every day, fearing it might be affecting Zhang Xu's well-being or even bringing him bad luck. Whenever he used his Yin-yang Eye, he saw how Zhang Xu had weak yang energy.

Zhang Xu just sat there, surprised by Lin Feiran's sudden seri-

ousness.

From his new seat in the back, Gu Kaifeng watched Lin Feiran's sincere effort to offer advice and could only smile and shake his head at the scene.

Hoping to end the conversation on a brighter note, Lin Feiran gave Zhang Xu an encouraging thumbs-up. "You got this!" he said with a bright smile before hurrying out of the room, leaving a puzzled Zhang Xu behind.

With the seat-switching issue sorted out, Lin Feiran was noticeably more cheerful. During lunch, he beamed, looking almost affectionately at the meat on his tray, a gentle smile playing on his lips.

Wang Zhuo elbowed Gu Kaifeng, nodding subtly toward Lin Feiran. Following his gaze, Gu Kaifeng saw Lin Feiran's radiant happiness and returned a small smile before focusing back on his meal.

"What's got him so happy?" Wang Zhuo whispered.

Gu Kaifeng shrugged, a touch of pride in his voice. "Take a guess."

"You think it's just because of the seat change?"

"What else?"

Wang Zhuo, still amazed, commented, "Are you made of money or something? Look at how joyful he is now. I feel like I've lost a fortune."

Gu Kaifeng just smiled enigmatically.

Leaning forward, Wang Zhuo tried to get a better look at Lin Feiran. "Hey," he said after a moment.

"What now?" Gu Kaifeng asked, a bit annoyed.

"He's quite handsome, in a delicate way, like a pretty girl."

Gu Kaifeng gave him a blank look.

Undeterred, Wang Zhuo continued, "He's got dimples when he smiles. Could've been a real heartbreaker if he were a girl. Such a pity."

Gu Kaifeng, visibly irritated, lifted his lunch tray to block Wang Zhuo's view. "Focus on your food, not him."

Still trying to catch a glimpse, Wang Zhuo teased, "Oh? Protecting your hubby, huh? Let me see! Oh dear, my friend's hubby is quite a catch!"

Gu Kaifeng laughed but warned, "Dude, have you lost your damn mind?"

Meanwhile, Lin Feiran's ears reddened. He awkwardly turned away and pretended he didn't hear anything.

Back in the classroom after lunch, Lin Feiran settled into his new seat next to Gu Kaifeng. He subtly nudged Gu Kaifeng's shoe with his foot, drawing on his strong yang energy during the study session. Sitting up straight, he radiated a confidence that seemed to challenge any lingering ghosts, like he was daring them to try and scare him.

*Come on, try me! Show me what you've got! Come at me!* He almost felt like breaking into a rap!

Gu Kaifeng, amused by Lin Feiran's posture, nudged the tall boy in front of Lin Feiran with his pen. "Might want to duck down a bit," he suggested.

The tall boy looked confused.

Lin Feiran quickly waved off the suggestion. "It's fine, I can see the board."

Gu Kaifeng, undeterred, stood up and walked to the front of the classroom. He squatted down, rummaged through the podium, and pulled out a pair of pliers. He returned to the tall boy and tapped his desk, "Hey, stand up for a sec."

As the tall boy stood, Gu Kaifeng flipped his chair and began adjusting its height. He worked the pliers to adjust the seat to its lowest, effectively making it a few centimetres shorter. When he was done, he set the chair back upright and gave the tall boy a reassuring pat on the shoulder. "Lower's better for stability," he said with a grin.

The tall boy, still puzzled by the whole ordeal, sat down in his newly adjusted chair.

As for Lin Feiran, the classroom suddenly seemed a lot bigger and brighter.

The rest of the day passed by quickly, even with the two-hour evening study session. With Gu Kaifeng nearby, Lin Feiran was free from ghostly distractions, which boosted his focus and productivity. He caught up on his studies and felt a huge sense of achievement.

Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng headed back to their dorm at eight. Once there, Gu Kaifeng began to gather his shower items.

"Um... give me a sec." Seeing Gu Kaifeng plan to take a shower, Lin Feiran hastily collected his own toiletries. He hesitated a bit before adding in a quiet voice, "I'll join you if that's okay."

Their school's dormitory layout was a bit odd. Two students would share a room yet there was a surprising lack of private bathrooms. Instead, there were communal showers and water stations in the adjacent building. Lin Feiran usually showered

daily, except when he was swamped with homework, but ever since that unsettling phone call from his dad on Monday, his life had turned into a horror movie. His routine had been completely destroyed, and he hadn't taken a proper shower in three and a half days. He only managed to clean his body with a wet towel yesterday. The idea of showering in Gu Kaifeng's presence was awkward, yet he knew he needed to clean up before sharing a bed.

Gu Kaifeng, almost as if he was expecting Lin Feiran to tag along, glanced at him with a slight, knowing smile. "Sure, let's go together."

As they entered the communal showers, Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng each picked a locker for their belongings and began undressing. They were used to changing in each other's presence as roommates, but they had always kept a certain level of modesty, never fully undressing. This was the first time they were completely exposed in such close quarters.

While Gu Kaifeng seemed unfazed, Lin Feiran was noticeably more self-conscious. He hesitated as he reached out to the last piece of clothing he had on, his thumbs nervously lingering on the waistband of his underwear. His ears turned a faint shade of pink, betraying his embarrassment.

Lin Feiran wasn't usually shy about nudity, but the thought of Gu Kaifeng seeing him like this made him particularly uneasy.

Gu Kaifeng, already undressed, casually approached Lin Feiran, who was bending over to remove his underwear. Lin Feiran looked up and unintentionally caught a full view of Gu Kaifeng's penis. The competitive Lin Feiran sadly realized that even

in that particular aspect, he was the loser here.

Trying to shake off the feeling, Lin Ferian reminded himself that appearances can be deceiving, especially when it comes to size. *It's not a fair comparison in this state; he might appear large when flaccid, but it might not change much when erect.* He thought, trying to reassure himself.

Gu Kaifeng, standing confidently and watching Lin Feiran stare at his penis, quickly snapped him out of it. "Come on, take off your underwear," he said as Lin Feiran hesitated.

Lin Feiran was tongue-tied.

Gu Kaifeng continued, "Let's hurry up and get in there. It's getting crowded now, and we might struggle to find a spot."

Struggling to maintain his composure under Gu Kaifeng's straightforward gaze, Lin Feiran finally removed his last piece of clothing. He quickly bundled up his underwear, threw it into the locker, and shut the door with a loud clang. In his flurry, he could feel his face heating up.

His blushing in the communal showers was a clear sign of... well, something unmistakably gay!

This was all Lin Feiran could think about while being stark naked in front of his ex-rival. He covered his reddening face with his hand, keeping his eyes downcast as he walked toward the showers.

The communal showers were divided into individual cubicles by partitions, each with its own showerhead. While there were no doors, there were shower curtains for privacy. The partitions were tall enough but not so high that one couldn't catch a glimpse of their neighbours by standing on tiptoes or looking under the dividers. For Lin Feiran, this semi-private setup felt

reassuringly secure.

The showers were bustling at 8:20 p.m. Finding an empty stall was like winning the lottery. Gu Kaifeng quickly pointed out an available one to Lin Feiran. "Here, you go first."

Lin Feiran glanced at the stall. "What about you?"

"I'll find another one."

Lin Feiran hesitated. He had discovered that a touch to Gu Kaifeng could grant him five minutes of ghost-free time. However, having not showered properly in over three days, he longed for a thorough cleanse, and five minutes simply wasn't enough. The very thought of showering with water ghosts was absolutely terrifying to him. The fear that they might be lurking here while he couldn't see them gnawed at him. The memory of the ghastly, bloated one from yesterday sent shivers down his spine. He couldn't shake off the eerie thought that each stall might hide a "Beijing Tan"[5] water ghost, lying in wait for someone to step in, waiting to be watered.

Startled by a wave of fear, Lin Feiran sharply inhaled and impulsively grabbed Gu Kaifeng's wrist. Realizing how drastic his reaction was, he quickly released it and inhaled a reassuring breath of yang energy. Trying to sound casual, he suggested, "How about we look for two stalls next to each other?"

Gu Kaifeng raised an eyebrow, his smile hinting at amuse-

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5 Beijing tan: a seated pose in Chinese internet jargon, initially attributed to a Chinese celebrity. It characterises the informal way some Beijing youngsters sit. In this context, the term "Tan" gradually morphs into signifying a relaxed, casual posture. Thus, "Beijing Tan" embodies an exceedingly laid-back, almost reclined position, something between sitting and lying down.

ment. "Want to stick with me even in the shower?"

Lin Feiran nodded vigorously, abandoning all pretence of pride and declared boldly, "Yes!"

Gu Kaifeng's voice warmed with affection. "Such a little sticky rice cake."

Lin-little sticky rice cake-Feiran found himself at a loss for words.

Gu Kaifeng leaned in playfully, "How about we share a stall?"

"Um... maybe not?" Lin Feiran baulked at the idea, his eyes darting around nervously as he stammered.

Although Lin Feiran's fear of ghosts was real, the idea of sharing such a small space, both undressed, was a bit too gay for his comfort. He decided to confront his fears on his own, reassuring himself that invisible ghosts, if they even existed, were essentially harmless.

Gu Kaifeng, who had only been teasing with his suggestion, chuckled and didn't push the idea. He took Lin Feiran's hand, and they continued looking before finally finding two adjacent stalls. He let go of Lin Feiran's hand, and they each entered their respective showers.

Lin Feiran adjusted the water to a warm, comfortable temperature and started to wash himself. Since Gu Kaifeng was out of sight, he couldn't shake off the slight nervousness, pushing away any thoughts of lurking water ghosts.

As he relaxed under the warm water and lathered up the shower gel, Lin Feiran was startled by a whistle from the next stall. Turning his head, he saw Gu Kaifeng peeking over the partition, taking advantage of his height. Gu Kaifeng's hair, wet

from the water, had his bangs pushed back, fully exposing his sharply handsome face. A playful twinkle danced in his naturally alluring eyes, twinkling with mischief.

Lin Feiran's first reaction was to step back, but he realized this would give Gu Kaifeng an even clearer view, so he moved closer to the partition, ensuring only his head and neck were visible.

"What are you doing?" Lin Feiran asked, pressing his hands against the partition and tiptoeing to peer back at Gu Kaifeng, revealing only half of his face.

While on his toes, he nearly matched Gu Kaifeng in height, a realization that stirred a bit of envy in Lin Feiran. Now inches apart, they made eye contact, and Gu Kaifeng smiled mischievously. "We've been here for a while. Aren't you going to touch me?"

It was apparent that he had gotten Lin Feiran's actions over the past few days all figured out.

"Oh, right." Lin Feiran responded and then reached out. His hand hovered mid-air as he gazed uncertainly at Gu Kaifeng's attractive yet mocking face, unsure of where to touch. Eventually, as if compelled by some unseen force, he lightly tapped the tip of Gu Kaifeng's nose.

Caught off guard, Gu Kaifeng's eyes widened, and he chuckled at Lin Feiran's endearing, childlike gesture, playfully flicking Lin Feiran's nose in return.

Lin Feiran stood speechless. *I should have just touched his hair instead! Why does this feel like we are in a relationship?!*

After their showers, Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng headed back

to their dorm room. There was a surprise recitation in their upcoming Language Arts class, and Lin Feiran tried his best not to stress too much over it as he climbed into Gu Kaifeng's bed with his textbook. He settled comfortably in his pillow, propped against the wall, humming softly as he studied. Gu Kaifeng glanced over and decided to grab his own book to join him, arranging his pillow beside Lin Feiran's.

They sat side by side, engrossed in their reading, looking like a couple cosily studying together.

Lin Feiran tried to silently recite the text with his book upside down. But he soon faltered and flipped the book right side up again to check his words. At that moment, Gu Kaifeng leaned in, half of his body nearly draped over Lin Feiran. Before Lin Feiran could say anything, Gu Kaifeng covered the annotations at the bottom of the page with one hand while pointing to a character with the other. "Do you know what this one means?" he asked.

"Um, well," Lin Feiran, a bit flustered, admitted, "I forgot."

Gu Kaifeng ruffled Lin Feiran's hair playfully. "You won't remember it for very long if you just memorize without understanding. Let's look it up."

"I know it, I swear, it just slipped my mind..." Lin Feiran mumbled, his cheeks colouring as he edged away slightly. "Focus on your book and leave me alone," he added.

Gu Kaifeng stood up, fetched a literature reference book and handed it to Lin Feiran, teasingly saying, "Isn't that what you told Ms Zheng? That you wanted my help with your Language Arts?"

Lin Feiran was momentarily speechless, knowing he couldn't

reveal that his request for tutoring was just a cover.

Gu Kaifeng's tone became more earnest as he told Lin Feiran. "Take your time with the interpretations. Understand each word and line thoroughly before trying to memorize it. And if you forget something, just go over it again. Don't rush through it." He paused before adding, "You need to work on your Language Arts foundation first."

Lin Feiran, recalling his 15-point essay, pursed his lips and stayed silent.

His strong performance in math, physics, chemistry and a decent English score had secured his place in the prestigious high school's benchmark line. However, his low score in Language Arts during the entrance exams had been his biggest drawback. Feeling a pang of regret, he had promised himself to improve in Language Arts only to soon realize it wasn't a subject that could be mastered overnight. And now, the motivation he once had for Language Arts fizzled out to be just good enough to pass his tests.

With a slight blush on his cheeks, Lin Feiran focused intently on the book in front of him. His long eyelashes cast shadows on his face, giving him a gentle look. A faint, sweet fragrance from his shower gel lingered around him, and it was hard for Gu Kaifeng to ignore.

Out of the blue, Gu Kaifeng leaned in closer to Lin Feiran, inhaling subtly at his collar.

Surprised, Lin Feiran jerked back. "What are you doing?"

Gu Kaifeng asked quietly, "Why do you smell like milk?"

Lin Feiran's shower gel, a familiar "Milk and Honey" brand his mother often bought, had a gentle fragrance. He'd always

used it and, without much thought, brought a bottle to school, but now that Gu Kaifeng pointed it out, Lin Feiran suddenly felt self-consciousness.

Lin Feiran dramatically grabbed his collar and took a few exaggerated sniffs before sheepishly saying, "What? I don't smell like anything."

Gu Kaifeng smiled. "It's a nice scent, actually," he said, his lips curling up in a playful grin. "Kind of makes me wanna have a bite."

Silently, Lin Feiran, now a "Milk-flavoured Little Sticky Rice Cake", calmly adjusted his pillow. He wrapped himself snugly in the blanket, leaving only his hands clutching the book visible. Determined, he was set on keeping his milk-scented self safely cocooned.

Taking Gu Kaifeng's earlier advice to heart, Lin Feiran studied the interpretation carefully, reciting the text softly while nestled in bed, his feet occasionally brushing against Gu Kaifeng's. He seemed completely at ease, quietly and obediently immersed in his studies.

About half an hour later, Lin Feiran drifted to sleep, leaving the question of whether he had memorized the classics hanging in the air, unanswered.

In the still-lit dorm room, Gu Kaifeng watched, amused, as Lin Feiran slept soundly, his hands tightly gripping his Language Arts books. As Gu Kaifeng gently tried to take the books away, a half-asleep Lin Feiran clutched them back reflexively. During the tussle, Gu Kaifeng's hand accidentally brushed against Lin Feiran's lips. The brief contact was unexpectedly gentle, sending a subtle thrill through him that teasingly grazed the edges of his

heart.

Gu Kaifeng paused, his eyes lingering on Lin Feiran's face. He decided not to pull his hand away, leaving it in Lin Feiran's hold. The warmth from Lin Feiran's chest seeped through his pyjamas, warming Gu Kaifeng's hand and igniting a strange sense of restlessness. He gazed thoughtfully at Lin Feiran, taking a moment to admire the gentle contour of his collarbone.

At the tender age of fourteen, Gu Kaifeng discovered that his sexual orientation was different from most. Feeling no urgent need to disclose this, he chose not to come out so early. He was fortunate to be part of a progressive family where new ideas were readily embraced. Knowing his parents' open-mindedness, his coming out would be met with little resistance, so he felt no pressure to hide his sexuality and lived openly and confidently as a gay person.

From the moment Lin Feiran transferred to their school, Gu Kaifeng was captivated. It wasn't instant attraction; rather, Lin Feiran seemed to embody everything Gu Kaifeng admired. Gu Kaifeng was drawn to everything about him: the sparkle in his eyes, the curve of his lips, the shape of his nose and chin, and even the elegance of his ears. Lin Feiran's slender fingers, stylish hair, and slightly haughty yet dignified manner were exactly Gu Kaifeng's type.

As time passed, Gu Kaifeng's interest in Lin Feiran deepened into genuine fondness. However, Gu Kaifeng was puzzled by Lin Feiran's apparent disdain and wondered if it was just his natural demeanour. From the beginning, Lin Feiran had maintained a proud air around him, often giving Gu Kaifeng noth-

ing but cold glances. Gu Kaifeng, not one to pursue someone difficult, settled into a quiet standoff with Lin Feiran. He occasionally found joy in playfully teasing Lin Feiran to bring some excitement in his life from this beautiful boy's embarrassed responses.

However...

Ever since Lin Feiran faced a series of personal challenges, like the loss of his family, a severe fever, and haunting nightmares, Gu Kaifeng stepped up to offer care and support. This shift in dynamics, free from their previous animosity, changed something with Lin Feiran and softened his previously distant demeanour. His attitude transformed dramatically as he began to show more friendliness towards Gu Kaifeng.

Gu Kaifeng was amused yet genuinely pleased by Lin Feiran's change in nature and their newfound camaraderie. From the beginning, he had felt that Lin Feiran didn't quite conform to the typical straight-guy mould. This intuition had been proven correct. However, with their newfound closeness, Lin Feiran—this "little sticky rice cake"—was almost constantly by his side, engaging in playful, often flirtatious banter. Gu Kaifeng, who was already quite attracted to his personality and looks, found himself increasingly drawn to Lin Feiran, with each interaction stirring up feelings inside him. Despite this, Gu Kaifeng hesitated to express his true feelings, cautious of how to navigate his first romance. Nonetheless, he cherished the exciting uncertainty of their evolving relationship.

# Chapter 05

Gu Kaifeng gently pulled his hand away a few minutes later, noticing that Lin Feiran had dozed off. He quietly set the book aside and slipped out of bed. With just about ten minutes left before lights-out, he turned on a small reading lamp on his desk and flicked off the main light. Moving quietly, he grabbed some tissues and stealthily made his way to the toilet.

Enough was enough. After two days filled with non-stop teasing and hardly any sleep, Gu Kaifeng was determined to face his escalating desires head-on with some hands-on action!

Masturbating in the dorm room was too dangerous. The thought of Lin Feiran suddenly waking up during his private act filled Gu Kaifeng with unbearable awkwardness. So, on this dark, windy night, the usually confident and attractive school hunk discreetly pocketed the tissues and slipped into the toilet. He entered an empty stall and started squeezing one out.

In the toilet's dim, and somewhat eerie atmosphere, Gu Kaifeng felt a surge of anticipation. The gentle warmth and faint,

sweet memory of Lin Feiran's embrace fuelled his right hand. Visions of Lin Feiran flooded his mind: those innocent, deer-like eyes; the sharp, defined lines of his collarbones; his feet, shyly stretched out under the desk. His cute attempts at feigning nonchalance to hide his nervousness, the memory of a soft kiss barely touching the back of his hand, the delicate contours of Lin's face as he rested his chin in his palm...

As Gu Kaifeng felt a bead of sweat form on his forehead and his emotions intensified, he was suddenly snapped out of his reverie by a familiar voice outside the stall. "Gu Kaifeng?"

It was Lin Feiran.

Gu Kaifeng instantly climaxed.

Taking a deep, shaky breath, Gu Kaifeng swiftly used the tissues to wipe away any traces of semen on his hand, crumpled them, and tossed them into the bin.

Lin Feiran stood outside the only locked stall, a tinge of complaint in his voice as he addressed the closed door, "Gu Kaifeng, are you there?"

Gu Kaifeng put on his pants and pushed the door open. "Yeah, I'm here."

Lin Feiran was in his pyjamas and slippers. His hair was slightly tousled and he clutched a pillow in his arms. Upon seeing Gu Kaifeng, without hesitation, he extended his finger to poke Gu Kaifeng's abs to draw some of the yang energy.

"What brings you here?" Gu Kaifeng asked, his voice laced with playful curiosity.

There was a brief silence before Lin Feiran replied with feigned indifference, "Just needed to use the toilet."

The truth was that Lin Feiran had woken up to an empty bed.

The main light in the dorm was off, leaving only a ghostly dim glow from the reading lamp on the desk. Unsure of how long Gu Kaifeng had been gone and half-expecting to bump into a ghost any minute, Lin Feiran guessed he might be in the toilet. Clutching Gu Kaifeng's pillow tightly for some semblance of courage, he hurried over without thinking.

But admitting that to Gu Kaifeng? Not a chance!

Gu Kaifeng couldn't suppress a chuckle looking at Lin Feiran's evasive eyes. He was clearly not telling the truth yet seemed convinced of his excuse. Playfully ruffling Lin Feiran's hair, he replied with a smile, "Go on then. Why call out for me?"

"Just thought you might be here. So I called out on a whim," Lin Feiran replied, moving towards the urinal. He paused and turned, extending the pillow to Gu Kaifeng. "Here, hold this for a sec."

The poor pillow! Unwillingly, it had been dragged along for a nocturnal adventure in the toilet.

"You brought a pillow to the toilet?" Gu Kaifeng couldn't contain his amusement. Recalling the semen residue on his hand, he carefully tucked the pillow under his arm.

"It wasn't intentional. I was half asleep," Lin Feiran clicked his tongue, hastily defending himself. Then he positioned himself at the urinal, adjusting his pyjama pants slightly. Before taking out his penis to pee, he asked, "Mind waiting out here for a sec?"

Gu Kaifeng stepped out, pillow in his arms. He was waiting at the wash station, which led to the corridor. The lights were off, leaving the toilet and corridor deserted. He was relieved that Gu Kaifeng junior had quite remarkable endurance.

He turned on the tap and began to wash his hands leisurely,

not waiting for Lin Feiran to speak. As if expecting Lin Feiran to call out again, Gu Kaifeng responded, "I'm right here."

"I didn't ask for you," Lin Feiran shot back, his voice laced with a newfound boldness. "You can go back first."

After absorbing the yang energy, Lin Feiran exuded an air of fearlessness, as if he became a different person. The timidness that once clung to him had disappeared without a trace!

Meanwhile, after satisfying his intense desires, Gu Kaifeng slept soundly that night. Even with Lin Feiran wrapped around him like an octopus in the early hours, Gu Kaifeng's slumber was deep and undisturbed—a sign of his remarkable self-control.

In a half-awake daze, Gu Kaifeng made a calm resolution for the future: he'd use the times when his little sticky rice cake was asleep to discreetly slip away to the toilet for some juicy time for himself.

As a new day broke, Lin Feiran, nestled safely in his human shield, enjoyed a peaceful morning and afternoon.

The last period of the day was usually reserved for study sessions. Just before class, Lin Feiran checked the calendar on his phone and realized with a start that the school arts festival was just around the corner next Thursday.

In the whirl of his recent ghostly scares, he had completely forgotten about it. The red circle around the upcoming date on his calendar sent a jolt of anxiety through him. He frowned, remembering the piano solo he was supposed to perform for the entire school—a piece where he was still far from perfect on.

The recent spooky events had left Lin Feiran feeling detached

from life and death and his everyday life, which in turn dimmed his usual enthusiasm for the limelight. Despite this, knowing that his classmates were anticipating his piano solo after he had announced the program, he didn't like the idea of backing out. Yet, the prospect of practising alone in the music room seemed even more intimidating, especially after Wang Yao's stories of it being haunted. Pondering over those tales, he started to wonder if there was some truth to the spooky rumours.

Lin Feiran sighed, hesitated for a beat, and then nudged Gu Kaifeng casually. "You're emceeing the arts festival next Thursday, aren't you?"

Gu Kaifeng glanced over, propping his chin in his hand and turning towards Lin Feiran. "Yeah, what about it?"

"Have you got your script down?"

"Pretty much. It's not a lot to remember, really."

"But don't you have to rehearse with Wang Yao in the music room?"

Gu Kaifeng raised an eyebrow slightly. "It's not a big deal. We've gone over it. Just a quick run-through that day is all we need," he said nonchalantly.

Lin Feiran let out a somewhat deflated "Oh."

Gu Kaifeng flashed a charming smile. "And how's your piano piece coming? You missed a couple of notes last time I heard."

Lin Feiran's frown deepened. "It's only been a month. A little practice, and I'll be fine."

"Then you better get to it," Gu Kaifeng encouraged.

Lin Feiran flipped open his practice book, mumbling, "I'm not going."

Silence lingered for a moment.

"...What's up, Sticky?" Gu Kaifeng, sensing something unspoken, gently nudged Lin Feiran's leg with his own under the desk. His voice was softer now. "If you want company, just ask."

A wave of unspoken gratitude washed over Lin Feiran. He kept his eyes on the practice book, feigning indifference, and quietly confessed, "Yeah, I do."

His heart fluttered in a way he hadn't expected.

Gu Kaifeng chuckled as he stood up, casually slinging his school jacket over his shoulder. Lin Feiran was still pretending to focus on his book, Gu Kaifeng ruffled his hair. "I'm heading out. Hurry up, stick close to me now."

Without a second thought, Lin-little sticky rice cake immediately followed after Gu Kaifeng.

As the twilight poured into the music room, the setting sun cast a warm, orange glow over the piano. Lin Feiran carefully dusted off the piano bench with a tissue before opening it to pull out the music score. He placed the score on the stand and settled in on the left side of the bench. Tugging gently at the corner of Gu Kaifeng's uniform, he suggested, "You should sit here, too."

Gu Kaifeng took a seat beside him without any hesitation.

In an attempt to justify the request, Lin Feiran added, "That way, you can help me by holding the score."

Gu Kaifeng looked at the score, which was perfectly stable sitting on the stand by itself. With a playful smirk, he said, "Looks like it's holding up just fine. Go ahead, start playing."

Lin Feiran paused for a moment, a bit lost for words.

Regaining his composure, Lin Feiran began to play, filling the

room with a melody that was both resplendent and passionate, the notes resonating within the room.

Lin Feiran's piano journey had started in elementary school, initially as a means to cultivate his tastes and diversify his skills. Although he never planned on pursuing music as a career and stopped refining his skills after reaching level 10 in his sophomore year, his proficiency was still remarkable. Sitting upright, chin slightly raised, his fingers gracefully dancing on the keys at a dizzying speed, Lin Feiran alternated quick glances at the score with deep contemplative gazes at the keys. At this moment, his intense focus only accentuated his already sophisticated profile. When he hit the powerful forte chords, his slender frame seemed to become one with the music, creating a captivating resonance.

The room was bathed in the soft glow of the sunset. Gu Kaifeng watched quietly from the side, pretending not to notice Lin Feiran's leg deliberately brushing against his while using the piano pedal.

*Can't he sit still, even when playing the piano? Is the seat uncomfortable?* Gu Kaifeng thought, amused. He moved closer to Lin Feiran, their thighs pressing together, the warmth from their bodies mingling through the fabric of their school uniforms. Lin Feiran, deep in concentration on the music score, seemed oblivious to their closeness. Yet, the pink tinge spreading to his ears revealed his inner turmoil, not showing any change of expression during his performance.

Lin Feiran was internally flustered. *Wh-What on earth was he doing? Why so close? It's so gay!*

In this undeniably ambiguous atmosphere, Lin Feiran prac-

tised his piece several times. In the first few runs, a few notes were off, but his final run was seamless and flawless. If he could maintain this level of accuracy without the score, he'd be ready for the performance.

As the last note of the piece echoed in the air, Lin Feiran stayed seated, head held high, a picture of composure. Inside, though, he was giving himself a mental standing ovation!

Gu Kaifeng looked at Lin Feiran, his expression a blend of 80% casualness and 20% pride, barely suppressing a chuckle.

Lin Feiran turned to him, feigning modesty, and asked, "How was it? Was it okay?"

*Come on, say it was amazing! Compliment me!*

Gu Kaifeng, picking up on Lin Feiran's silent wish, smiled warmly. "Bravo! That was exceptional." He clapped his hands with gusto, raising them high for an exaggerated round of applause before bringing them down again. "I can hear the applause continuing and coming in waves!"

"Your words flatter me." His chest swelled with pride as he wagged his metaphorical tail like a puppy. He jerked a thumb towards himself with a playful glint in his eyes. Flashing a smile, he said, "As a thank you, how about I serenade you? Name any pop song, I've got them all up here." He tapped his temple with a grin.

"Any song works for me," Gu Kaifeng replied with a wink. "I listen to everything."

"Alright then," Lin Feiran nodded, impressed by Gu Kaifeng's eclectic taste.

After a moment's thought, Lin Feiran chose a slow-tempo song, perfect for both playing and singing, and one he knew in-

side out. This song had once earned him a huge number of fans back in middle school.

The room soon echoed with the soulful strains of a melancholic piano tune. After the intro, Lin Feiran cleared his throat and began to sing, "*Only the piano stays to talk with me for a day...*"[6]

His voice, untrained yet naturally gifted, carried the tune flawlessly, a testament to his musical prowess. It resonated with clarity and vibrancy, brimming with the freshness of youth, capturing the essence of the song and drawing his listener in.

Lin Feiran continued, "*Sleeping cello, quiet and old...*" Suddenly, Gu Kaifeng's voice joined in, "*I believe you've made it very clear. I understand, and I also know...*"

Lin Feiran stopped, his eyes widening in surprise. He turned to Gu Kaifeng, a mixture of emotions playing across his face as the music trailed off.

Gu Kaifeng stopped singing after that line, his dark eyes locked on Lin Feiran with the tension of unspoken words. He nudged him playfully, "Keep going."

"Gu Kaifeng," Lin Feiran's lips curved into a mischievous smile, mirroring the smile Gu Kaifeng had when he first glimpsed Lin Feiran's 15-point essay. "Your singing's way off-key. Do your fans know about this?"

A flicker of annoyance, laced with amusement, flashed across Gu Kaifeng's face. After a beat, he asked, "Is that what you're really focusing on?"

"Absolutely!" Lin Feiran shot back confidently.

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6 Lyrics come from Silence by a well-known singer, Jay Chou.

Gu Kaifeng was left speechless.

*Finally, I have the upper hand! I have my moments over Mr Perfect after all.* Lin Feiran's spirits soared as he resumed the melody, his excited tail wagging in triumph. This little cutie was too much for Gu Kaifeng's heart, he could barely hold himself back.

As the last notes faded, it was time to wrap up their last study session. They locked up the music room and headed to the canteen, beating the crowd of hungry students. Settling down with their food-laden trays, they sat facing each other.

Gu Kaifeng's unwavering charm had taken a comical hit with his off-key singing, and it had helped alleviate Lin Feiran's simmering jealousy. Now, Gu Kaifeng seemed way more appealing. Under the table, Lin Feiran playfully nudged Gu Kaifeng's foot with his own. While sneaking glances at Gu Kaifeng's striking features, he remarked, "You know, I've realised you're actually quite handsome."

Gu Kaifeng returned with a playful tap of his foot against Lin Feiran's shin, his eyebrow arching in amusement. "Only just realised?"

Chewing thoughtfully on a piece of juicy braised pork, Lin Feiran withdrew his foot, a bit sheepishly. "Well, I've kind of noticed for a few days now."

Gu Kaifeng's gaze lingered on Lin Feiran's lips, now glistening with a sheen from the sauce. He replied with an air of composure, "I've been aware of your good looks since you first showed up."

"I appreciate your honesty," Lin Feiran beamed. His invisible

tail was now wagging so hard, it could probably propel him to space. He boasted with a grin, "I think I'm pretty handsome and adorable too."

*Is he trying to be cute with me?* The thought sent a thrill through Gu Kaifeng. He had to resist the urge to pull Lin Feiran into a hug and shower him with affection.

In the bustling canteen, Gu Kaifeng took a deep breath, anchoring his restraint.

Saturday rolled around. Saturdays were still school days for juniors, albeit shorter without the evening study sessions, but at least the promise of freedom on Sundays made them better.

That afternoon, Lin Feiran once again coaxed Gu Kaifeng into joining him in the music room for piano practice during their last study period. Gu Kaifeng relaxed on the piano bench, idly scrolling through his phone, relishing in the joy of playing hooky.

As Lin Feiran played, his mind couldn't help but wander. Soon, the gates would open, releasing students for their weekends. He remembered how Gu Kaifeng usually spent these weekends hanging out with Wang Zhuo and other friends, only returning on Monday mornings. The thought of not seeing Gu Kaifeng for a whole evening and a day sparked a twinge of anxiety within him.

Throughout the day, his mind had been a tornado of scenarios. He'd thought about going home but was put off by the possibility of ghostly encounters, whether en route or at home. He figured facing a ghost at home was just as scary as encountering several in the dormitory. Not to mention, there would be no

one to turn to for help at home.

Lin Feiran had also toyed with the idea of asking some classmates to crash overnight, hoping that ghosts might be less intimidating in a group. But having just transferred in only a month ago, he hadn't quite found his footing in any social circles and was unsure who to approach. Besides, an all-nighter would mean skipping homework and being unprepared for Monday's classes.

The idea of going home with Gu Kaifeng crossed his mind, but he hesitated, feeling it was too bold to ask outright. Lost in these thoughts, he played the piano with a furrowed brow, his gaze often drifting to Gu Kaifeng.

Gu Kaifeng caught Lin Feiran's gaze during one of his glances and ruffled his hair playfully, quipping, "Do I look extra good today or something?"

Startled and caught off guard by the question, Lin Feiran could only blush in response.

"What's on your mind?" A hint of amusement made its way into Gu Kaifeng's voice. "Come on, tell me."

Gathering his courage, Lin Feiran cautiously asked, "Are you going home tonight?"

"Yes, aren't you?" replied Gu Kaifeng.

"My dad's been sent abroad for work, and my mom's also out of town," Lin Feiran said, a note of loneliness in his voice.

Gu Kaifeng realized then why Lin Feiran had worn a perennial scowl when he'd first arrived. Adjusting to boarding school life must have been tough for him.

Raising an eyebrow, Gu Kaifeng asked, "So, you gonna stay in the dorm?"

"Not sure. I might go home, but it's been a while since it's been cleaned." Lin Feiran shot a glance at Gu Kaifeng, reading his expression before asking nonchalantly. "Where do you live by the way?"

"Nanshan Street," Gu Kaifeng answered, glancing back at his phone. A faint smile played on his lips.

"Oh, Nanshan Street's pretty cool. My parents thought about getting a villa there," Lin Feiran shared, trying to seem nonchalant. "But they ditched the idea. Couldn't decide if they were gonna move to another city for work or not."

"We almost became neighbours then," Gu Kaifeng remarked, his eyes lighting up.

"Yeah, what a coincidence," Lin Feiran continued, "Do you live with your parents there?"

"Sort of." Gu Kaifeng replied, his gaze piercing as he noticed the slight blush on Lin Feiran's ears. He spoke with a thoughtful pause, "But they're super busy with work and all, so it's usually just me at the house."

The end-of-school bell rang just as Lin Feiran was about to speak. As he gathered his music scores, a sense of frustration bubbled within him. If only he'd grown closer to Gu Kaifeng sooner. Then, it wouldn't feel so difficult to say what he wanted.

Leaning against the piano, hands in his pockets, Gu Kaifeng watched the play of emotions on Lin Feiran's face with an amused glint in his eyes.

*Alright, just follow him out. Gotta stick close to him as long as I can!* Lin Feiran took a deep breath and decided to apply his "sticky" tactics, "Any plans for tonight?"

"I need a change of scenery. Been cooped up all week," Gu

Kaifeng replied, noticing Lin Feiran's hesitant expression. A teasing smile played on his lips. "Got somewhere in mind?"

"But what about Wang Zhuo and the others?" Lin Feiran asked.

"Nah, skipping them today." Gu Kaifeng shrugged, immediately bailing on his plans to meet with Wang Zhuo. "They're off to a bar, but that's too much racket for me. What do you usually do on weekends?"

"I usually hang out with friends at..." Lin Feiran almost blurted out "karaoke" but stopped himself. Taking Gu Kaifeng to karaoke? *That's like inviting someone with a broken leg to a dance club! Let's not!*

"Just the usual stuff, like movies or video games," he replied more thoughtfully.

"Sounds perfect. Let's grab our homework from the classroom and then head back to change," Gu Kaifeng suggested, slipping on his jacket. He was already texting Wang Zhuo as he stepped out of the music room, leaving Lin Feiran to lock up.

From down the corridor, Lin Feiran could hear Gu Kaifeng's voice on the phone, playful and teasing. "Hey, Little Zhuo, I've got other plans tonight. Catch you later." A pause, and then, "Yeah, I'm hanging out with my 'hubby'. You heard right. Jealous?"

*Hubby?! Who?* The word made Lin Feiran's cheeks flush. He quickly pocketed the keys and hurried after Gu Kaifeng, steps quick despite his short legs. His face was a blend of disbelief and irritation, ready to challenge Gu Kaifeng on his outrageous claim.

Gu Kaifeng wrapped up the call with a playful remark, "I

gotta go now. My 'hubby' here is starting to pout. Bye." After ending the call, his gaze lingered teasingly on Lin Feiran. In the warm twilight glow streaming through the glass, Gu Kaifeng's eyes shone clear and bright like amber jewels.

Caught in the moment, Lin Feiran found himself momentarily transfixed.

Gu Kaifeng put away his phone in his pocket and lightly patted Lin Feiran's head as he walked past him towards the stairs. "What do you feel like eating tonight? My treat." He simply pretended not to see Lin Feiran's annoyance.

Catching up, Lin Feiran asked, "Who were you calling your 'hubby'?"

Gu Kaifeng was wearing a smirk, "Does it bother you?"

*I am straight! Such jokes won't bother me!*

"No, of course not. I was just curious," Lin Feiran quickly assured, shaking his head, eager to change the subject. "Let's split the bill for dinner."

Gu Kaifeng clicked his tongue. "No worries, just make it up to me next Saturday."

*Huuuuh! They already had plans for next Saturday?!* A surge of excitement fluttered in Lin Feiran's heart.

"Deal," he said with newfound cheerfulness.

Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng made their way to the classroom to pick up their backpacks and the homework due on Monday. Lin Feiran quickly packed up his assignments. He was determined not to return to the dorm alone and confront any lurking ghosts. Once they had their bags, they changed into casual clothes and left the school grounds.

They headed to a commercial district about three kilometres from the school. It was a popular spot among students for its proximity and variety. Gu Kaifeng, who knew the area well, led Lin Feiran to a restaurant famous for its savoury barbecue. There, Lin-little sticky rice cake-Feiran, found himself indulging in so much food that he could've been a meat-stuffed rice cake. After the meal, Lin Feiran wandered around the mall content and satisfied.

The mall buzzed with life on a Saturday night. A fashion show in the central hall, complete with upbeat music, added to the vibrant scene. Waiters stood at restaurant entrances, handing out flyers with welcoming smiles. Couples strolled by, hand in hand, contributing to the joyful ambience. Bright lights and continuous ads on LED screens created a festive, anti-ghost atmosphere.

Curiosity piqued, Lin Feiran wondered what it would be like to use the power of his Yin-yang Eye here. He had never ventured outside the school grounds since gaining his ability. Gu Kaifeng had mentioned that the school was built on an old graveyard, which explained the high population of ghosts. Lin Feiran wondered if other places might be different. Curiosity piqued, he deliberately kept some distance from Gu Kaifeng so he could find out for himself. A mix of anticipation and hope filled him as they took the elevator from the ground floor to the top for more exploration.

The top floor of the mall, bustling with young couples near the cinema, was a lively scene. As they walked by, Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng were surrounded by the soft chatter and laughter of

these lovebirds.

Gu Kaifeng mused aloud while browsing a display of movie posters, "Wonder what movies are worth watching these days..." Nearby, a group of girls, also there for a movie, began giggling and whispering upon spotting Gu Kaifeng. Lin Feiran, catching bits of their conversation, felt a pang of jealousy. The girls seemed totally smitten with Gu Kaifeng and barely looked in his direction.

Suddenly, Lin Feiran felt an icy chill crawl up his legs, sending a shudder through him as if he'd been dunked in freezing water. His temperature seemed to plummet.

*Not this again...* Taking a deep breath, Lin Feiran braced himself before looking around.

As the time for the next movie showing neared, a crowd started forming at the ticket counter, buzzing with excitement. But it wasn't just the living flocking to the cinema. As the movie announcement echoed through the mall, Lin Feiran witnessed something extraordinary: over a hundred ghosts emerged from all directions, converging at the ticket counter. They were a ghastly sight—some carrying their intestines, others holding their severed heads, and a few dragging their lower halves, now just blood-soaked remnants. Most looked like they had succumbed to natural causes or illness, their expressions pale and forlorn.

It seemed these ghosts were eager to partake in the free movie showing. After all, who could pass up a good film, dead or alive?

Lin Feiran recalled Gu Kaifeng's words from the music room about the 108 billion people who had lived and died on Earth, realizing now more than ever that ghosts were indeed every-

where. He had prepared himself for such sights, but the sheer number of ghosts converging at the ticket counter was still a shocking sight. As he was about to reach out to Gu Kaifeng to close his Yin-yang Eye, he hesitated when an elderly ghost couple, trembling, approached him.

They appeared to have lived well into their nineties before passing away. Dressed in neat burial clothes, their faces, though pale and wrinkled, were marked by kind smiles. In life, they might have relied on canes to walk, but now, as ghosts, they had to depend on each other for support. As they slowly made their way over, they each steadied the other when they faltered, a poignant picture of mutual support.

Walking normally was anything but easy for them.

Lin Feiran watched them, momentarily transfixed. These elderly ghosts, peaceful in their passing, offered a stark contrast to the gory sights of disembowelled, headless, and legless ghosts he'd just seen. They were almost soothing to look at. He found that his eyes continued to be drawn to them.

"You think you're still young, off to see movies?" the old lady gently rubbed her companion.

"I'm as spry as ever!" the old man retorted with a hint of playful defiance. He let go of his wife's hand, wobbled in front of her, then bent down, offering, "I can even carry you. Hop on!"

Such defiance in the face of age!

But as he bent down, the old man lost his balance, tumbling towards the ground.

"Huh?" With the two elderly ghosts close at hand, Lin Feiran reacted instinctively, stepping forward to intercept the falling

old man.

As the old man descended upon him, Lin Feiran was enveloped in an icy chill, much like walking into a freezing winter night, making him gasp in shock. The ghost's fall seemed to slow as he passed through Lin Feiran, like sinking through a dense, viscous fluid. In this slowed state, the old lady reached out just in time to catch her husband.

"Phew—" Lin Feiran was too caught up in the moment to think of anything else. He took deep breaths, trying to shake off the intense cold gripping his body. Regaining some composure, he rushed over to Gu Kaifeng and gave him a firm pat on the shoulder. The moment he touched Gu Kaifeng, the intense coldness vanished as if it had never been there.

Lin Feiran scolded himself internally. *Damn! What was I thinking? Trying to catch a ghost? It's not like he can be injured again.*

"What movie do you feel like watching?" Gu Kaifeng asked, turning to Lin Feiran. He paused, noticing Lin Feiran's pallor. "You look a bit off. Everything okay?"

Lin Feiran gestured upwards, blaming the bright lights. "Must be the lighting." But then, unexpectedly, Gu Kaifeng reached out and gently held Lin Feiran's fingers, his eyes softening with concern. "Your hands are cold. You sure you're not chilly?"

"No," Lin Feiran shook his head, feeling a flush of warmth return to his face under Gu Kaifeng's gaze. His cheeks regained a healthy rosy tint. Gu Kaifeng let go of Lin Feiran's hand, but continued to watch him with a hint of amusement in his dark eyes.

Feeling an unusual flutter in his heart, Lin Feiran quickly shifted the conversation. "What's good in theatres right now? I haven't kept up."

"There's this horror film everyone's talking about," Gu Kaifeng nodded towards a poster. "Think you can handle it without getting nightmares?"

"Scared? Me? Never," Lin Feiran chuckled. *I just touched a real ghost! And ran into over a hundred of them! Me being scared of a horror movie? What a joke!*

"Alright then, I'll grab the tickets. It starts in fifteen minutes," Gu Kaifeng said, smiling.

Lin Feiran suddenly grasped his wrist. "Actually, let's skip the movie. I'm not really feeling it," he suggested, a hint of timidity in his voice.

It wasn't the movie that bothered him, but the thought of the crowded cinema filled with ghosts. He couldn't help but wonder where they'll all sit. On top of the living?!

*Why is this little scaredy-cat so entertaining?* Gu Kaifeng thought, his amusement evident. He was clearly charmed by Lin Feiran's cute reactions. "Okay, what do you want to do instead?"

"Let's check out some shops. I need a few things," Lin Feiran suggested, already plotting on how to subtly earn some favour with Gu Kaifeng before asking to spend the weekend at his house.

As they ambled their way through the mall, passing by one shop after another, Lin Feiran considered buying Gu Kaifeng a small gift, thinking it might make him harder to say no later. However, finding something appropriate was tricky. Their school's strict uniform policy left little room for personal acces-

sories. The dress code covered everything from top to bottom except for shoes. But with shoes, Gu Kaifeng already had plenty. Belts, lighters, cologne, or razors, these didn't seem like appropriate gifts for someone who was just his classmate.

Lin Feiran's eyes lit up as they wandered into an upscale stationery store, its elegant decor hinting at the high-quality, though somewhat pricey, items inside. The idea of stationery struck him as perfect—it was both practical and personal, stylish yet affordable. Excited, he nudged Gu Kaifeng towards the store.

Inside, they were immediately drawn to a display of elegant imported glass dip pens. These weren't just writing tools; they were like sleek, practical pieces of art. Made from glass, each swirled with stunning colours, their spiral tips catching the light like tiny stars. The prices varied from hundreds to thousands of RMB, but each pen promised a unique and exquisite writing experience. To Lin Feiran, they were the ideal gift.

"Check this out," Lin Feiran said, holding up a dip pen with a delicate white feather pattern.

"It's pretty cool," Gu Kaifeng observed, a playful glint in his eye. "Thinking about improving your calligraphy?"

"Nah, my handwriting is hopeless." Lin Feiran's cheeks flushed with a shy warmth, his gaze slipping away guiltily. As he spoke, his voice lowered to a bashful whisper, "I was thinking of... maybe getting one for you..." He handed the pen to Gu Kaifeng.

Gu Kaifeng took the pen. "Alright, this one's mine then."

Relieved that Gu Kaifeng didn't question the impromptu nature of the gift. Lin Feiran moved to the back of the display

and beckoned him over. "They have different coloured inks over there. Got a favourite?"

As they browsed, Gu Kaifeng flipped the question. "Which colour do you like?"

Lin Feiran's finger hovered over a label, his voice soft as he read, "A cherry blossom street..."

Just then, a sales assistant came over, offering a notebook to test the pen. She uncapped the ink bottle Lin Feiran had chosen and encouraged, "This is a beautiful colour. Why not try it out?"

Gu Kaifeng flipped to a blank page, dipped the pen into the pink ink, and raised an eyebrow. "Perfect colour for love letters, right?" he said, half-joking. With a flair, he penned, "To little sticky rice cake Lin Feiran," the seven words elegantly scripted in the top left corner.

Lin Feiran's cheeks deepened in colour as he stammered, "Why are you writing my name..."

"I'll write mine too." Gu Kaifeng wrote his name at the bottom right corner, "From your dearest desk mate, Gu Kaifeng." Another seven elegant words sprawled across the page.

It almost looked like a draft of a love letter to Lin Feiran.

"Hey!" Lin Feiran protested.

With a cheeky grin, Gu Kaifeng tore off the page and handed it to Lin Feiran. "Love letter for you."

Lin Feiran's face was now a deep crimson. "Are you crazy?!" he blurted out.

Despite his protests, Lin Feiran couldn't help but be captivated by the elegant calligraphy. He stared at the "14-word love letter" for a moment before carefully folding the paper and putting

it into his backpack despite his stern expression. The thought of discarding such beautiful handwriting was unthinkable.

The sales assistant gave them a knowing look, her smile barely contained.

"I'll take this pen and the ink," Gu Kaifeng said cheerfully, smiling back at the sales assistant. "Could you grab me a new set, please?"

"Certainly, just one moment," she replied, heading to the back.

Lin Feiran's gaze darted around the room from the ceiling to the floor. "You know, that colour was just a random pick. You don't have to go with pink if you don't want to. It's a bit... gay."

Gu Kaifeng's lips twisted into a playful smile. "I don't mind being a bit gay."

Lin Feiran was momentarily lost for words at his response.

When the sales assistant returned with a new set of ink and pen, they went to line up at the cashier. Lin Feiran reached for his wallet, but Gu Kaifeng had already completed the transaction before Lin Feiran could even start counting his cash.

"I wanted to buy this for you. It should be on me," Lin Feiran said, his voice tinged with concern. *Is there any chance I can earn some goodwill points with you?*

Gu Kaifeng smiled and casually stuffed the change into his pocket. "Feels like a gift from you anyway," he said, picking up the bag with the pen and ink set. "Let's head back. I'll pen you some letters for kicks."

As Gu Kaifeng walked out of the store, Lin Feiran hurried after him, not ready to drop the subject. "But I thought I was paying..."

Suddenly, Gu Kaifeng turned around, and Lin Feiran nearly collided with him. Gu Kaifeng playfully tapped Lin Feiran's nose. "I haven't given you a gift yet. It wouldn't be right to have you spend money on me first. Just roll with it, okay?"

Lin Feiran paused, thrown off by Gu Kaifeng's words. They sounded like something more suited to a romantic relationship than a friendship. With the playful "love letter" tucked in his backpack, Lin Feiran's mind was a whirlwind of confusion.

Caught up in these thoughts, Lin Feiran was startled when Gu Kaifeng leaned in and whispered, "Hey, remember that dream you told me about?"

Lin Feiran was momentarily lost for words. *The last thing I want to revisit is that "dream"!*

Gu Kaifeng's lips twisted into a mischievous half-smile. "You know, the disco party one with dancing ghosts in the dorm and flying eyeballs?"

Annoyance flickered across Lin Feiran's face.

Gu Kaifeng chuckled lightly, his tone teasing. "You're not still freaked out by that, are you?"

*Of course I'm still freaked out! Why bring that up now?* Lin Feiran thought, but he masked his fear with a scoff and a show of bravado. "Scared? Please."

"That's the spirit," Gu Kaifeng replied.

As they walked, Lin Feiran hesitated, and then gently tugged on Gu Kaifeng's sleeve. "Are your parents home tonight?"

Gu Kaifeng shook his head, "Just texted my mom. They're at a spa resort with some clients and won't be back until after tomorrow."

A spark of excitement ignited in Lin Feiran. "How big is your

villa? How many bedrooms?"

"Five." Gu Kaifeng replied.

"Wow, that's huge," Lin Feiran murmured, his mind buzzing with ideas.

Gu Kaifeng nearly burst into laughter. He'd picked up on Lin Feiran's hints—the indirect way he was trying to score an invite was just too amusing. Deciding to tease him a bit more, he managed to keep a straight face. "Yeah, plenty of space."

Lin Feiran's cheeks flushed a light pink. He hesitated before asking, "And your bed? Big?"

Gu Kaifeng feigned contemplation. "Hmm, just a king-size," he replied.

"That sounds spacious," Lin Feiran said, a touch of frustration in his voice.

*Why won't he just invite me already? Am I not being clear enough?!*

Gu Kaifeng casually draped an arm around Lin Feiran's waist, then let it drop as if it were nothing. "Oh, it's spacious alright. You'd fit just fine, with room to spare even."

Lin Feiran's heart raced at the suggestion. "What did you say?" he asked, trying to sound nonchalant.

A mischievous glint appeared in Gu Kaifeng's eyes. "How about you come over?" His smile was inviting.

Trying to maintain composure while his heart fluttered with excitement, Lin Feiran responded, "Sure, sounds better than being alone."

His effort to appear nonchalant couldn't hide the sparkle of joy in his eyes. He looked like he could barely contain his happiness.

Gu Kaifeng affectionately ruffled Lin Feiran's hair. "Great, it's decided. But first, let's hit the arcade," he suggested, nodding towards a nearby game centre.

"Awesome!" Lin Feiran's problem for the day seemed resolved. His mood was noticeably better, and he dashed off to grab some game tokens with a skip in his step.

Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng kicked off with a shooting game followed by a racing challenge, both of which had Lin Feiran on the losing end. But he wasn't one to back down easily. Afterwards, he nudged Gu Kaifeng towards a rhythm game. Turning up the difficulty, Lin Feiran let his quick reflexes and music experience take the spotlight, easily beating Gu Kaifeng. Despite his defeat, Gu Kaifeng watched with a mix of admiration and amusement. Seeing Lin Feiran walk with his head held high in triumph, Gu Kaifeng was hit with the impulsive urge to wrap him up in a bear hug and give him a teasing nibble.

Once they had burned through their stash of game tokens, Gu Kaifeng whipped out his phone to call for a ride. They stepped out of the mall's buzzing atmosphere into the quiet comfort of the car with its destination set for Nanshan Street.

# Chapter 06

They reached Gu Kaifeng's house in twenty minutes and, as expected, nobody was home.

Upon opening the door, they were instantly greeted by a lively little Yorkie. The small dog, with a gleaming, golden coat and a playful bow around its neck, wagged its tail and bounced around Gu Kaifeng excitedly.

Yorkies are known for being affectionate and clingy, and this one clearly loved Gu Kaifeng, especially with how hard it was wagging its tail. Gu Kaifeng effortlessly picked up the dog with one hand while offering Lin Feiran slippers with the other.

"Such a cute dog. I love the braid," Lin Feiran remarked with a smile, clearly a fan of pets. "Is she a girl?"

"Nope, he's a boy," Gu Kaifeng corrected, just as the Yorkie let out a happy yap.

Lin Feiran chuckled as he put on the slippers.

*Wait, why does even your dog seem a bit gay?*

"His name is Xiaxia." Gu Kaifeng said as he kissed the York-

ie's forehead. He then gestured towards Lin Feiran. "Meet your brother-in-law."

Lin Feiran looked puzzled, "How did I become his brother-in-law?"

Gu Kaifeng smiled. "He's part of the family. We even share the same birthday, 16 July, though it's thirteen years apart. So he's like my little brother. We even share a birthday cake every year."

Lin Feiran took the hint and shifted his gaze away from Gu Kaifeng. He bent down to play with Xiaxia, waving the dog toy in front of him. "Hey there, Gu Kaifeng's little brother."

Out of the blue, Gu Kaifeng asked, "Do you know my zodiac sign?"

Lin Feiran, who's never been into astrology, shrugged. "No idea. Virgo?"

Gu Kaifeng gently corrected him, "Actually, I'm a Cancer."

Lin Feiran responded with a simple "Oh," not showing much interest in the topic.

Gu Kaifeng, noting Lin Feiran's fair neck, added with a smile, "You know, they say Cancers are family-oriented and take great care of their partners."

The remark sent a warm flush through Lin Feiran, he could feel his heart beating faster. A bit flustered, he absentmindedly tossed the dog toy between his hands, passing it back and forth. Eventually, he found his voice and said, "Sounds like whoever it is will be pretty lucky to have you."

Gu Kaifeng watched as Lin Feiran's discomfort grew, an amused smile subtly playing at the corners of his mouth. After a brief pause, he asked, "When's your birthday?"

"November 9th," Lin Feiran answered.

"Scorpio," Gu Kaifeng said spontaneously.

Lin Feiran chuckled. "Yep, that's me. I don't know much else, though. What's the deal with Scorpios?"

A mischievous twinkle appeared in Gu Kaifeng's eyes, and he couldn't resist a little tease. "Well, Scorpios are often seen as jealous, sensitive, self-centred, and prone to holding grudges..."

Lin Feiran's expression darkened. He opened his mouth to object, then closed it without a word, frustrated.

Though he wanted to refute it, deep down, a part of him unwillingly agreed with Gu Kaifeng!

Gu Kaifeng observed Lin Feiran's internal conflict with amusement, then deftly switched topics. "But those are just the negatives. Scorpios have many positive traits too. They're intelligent, enigmatic, charismatic, highly intuitive, mentally strong, and often have a flair for the arts..."

"That does sound a lot like me." Lin Feiran's face lit up with a satisfied grin, his metaphorical tail seemed to perk up in satisfaction.

But then, Gu Kaifeng's voice deepened, "Scorpios are also known for their intense sexual energy..."

"Hey!"

"They might seem aloof at first..."

"Hey, hey!"

"But they're incredibly passionate deep down..."

Lin Feiran's face turned beet red as he stuttered, "Hey, hey, hey!"

His metaphorical tail, which had just perked up, quickly retreated to protect his behind!

Just then, Xiaxia wriggled out of Gu Kaifeng's arms and jumped to the floor, dashing to his food bowl in the corner. He eagerly buried his nose in his food, gobbling it up with gusto.

Feeling the need to clarify, Lin Feiran quickly countered, "I don't have intense desires at all. This whole astrology thing is just nonsense."

Gu Kaifeng raised an eyebrow. "Oh, really?"

Lin Feiran nodded emphatically. "Absolutely. You don't know me well enough. I lead a simple life with few desires. My heart doesn't skip a beat when I see beautiful girls. I can admire their beauty, but that's it. No... actually, I rarely have inappropriate thoughts. Sometimes I feel like I'm almost above all these worldly matters."

*I'm surprised you think that way. Did you really think I hadn't noticed?* Gu Kaifeng thought to himself, a knowing smirk on his lips.

"I am telling the truth..." Lin Feiran began, but then abruptly stopped his explanation.

*Man, my deskmate is acting so weird!*

"Come on, let me show you around," Gu Kaifeng said after making sure Xiaxia's food and water bowls were full. He tossed a chew toy to Xiaxia to keep him busy, and then started guiding Lin Feiran around the house. Passing the study, Gu Kaifeng placed the dip pen and ink, "gifts" from Lin Feiran, on his desk. He then pointed to a short sword in a glass case. "Check this out, it's a family heirloom."

"Really? How long has it been in your family?" Lin Feiran leaned in for a closer look at the short sword. The blade, speck-

led and marked with irregularities, radiated a rugged, ancient energy. It bore the scars of numerous battles.

"My father isn't even sure," Gu Kaifeng replied with a shrug. "It's been in the family for generations. Legend says it was a gift from an emperor to our ancestors."

Items steeped in such antiquity and passed down through countless generations, were far from ordinary. An ancient artefact like this sword must be rich with history. Novels often introduced that such objects could carry the lingering resentments of the past, like the spirits of those defeated by the blade... Swallowing nervously, Lin Feiran tentatively reached out and lightly touched Gu Kaifeng, half-expecting to encounter something otherworldly near the sword.

The tour continued, with Gu Kaifeng leading Lin Feiran through the large villa, up and down the stairs, and eventually, to his bedroom.

Since Lin Feiran hadn't planned on staying and didn't bring any clothes, Gu Kaifeng dug out a fresh set of pyjamas and underwear from his wardrobe. "They might be a bit large for you, but they'll work for tonight."

Lin Feiran accepted them quietly.

"You should shower first," Gu Kaifeng suggested, nodding towards the bathroom.

"Okay." Lin Feiran briefly touched Gu Kaifeng's arm to draw a bit of yang energy, mentally planning to finish his shower in five minutes.

Gu Kaifeng, noticing Lin Feiran's fleeting touch, arched an eyebrow playfully. "Or, we could shower together?"

"No, thanks." Clutching the borrowed clothes, Lin Feiran

quickly ducked into the bathroom and shut the door. He turned on the shower and quickly undressed. By the time he stepped under the water, it was perfectly warm. He lathered up the shampoo and body wash, gave himself a quick scrub, and rinsed off just as fast. When he emerged from the bathroom, dried and dressed, only four minutes had passed.

"You're done already?" Gu Kaifeng looked surprised as he looked over at Lin Feiran, his hair still damp and tousled. "Are you sure you're clean?" He teased.

"Completely." Lin Feiran assured him as he quickly walked over, his long bangs brushed to the side and speckled with water droplets. His face, flushed pink from the steam and his eyes, wide and alert, made him look like a small animal caught in the rain.

Gu Kaifeng couldn't suppress a smile. He grabbed a towel from the rack and gently draped it over Lin Feiran's head, dabbing his hair dry like one would with a puppy. Lin Feiran tried to step back, but Gu Kaifeng stayed close, his tone gentle yet chiding. "Stay still. Why'd you come out with your hair all wet?"

Lin Feiran paused under the towel, glancing up at Gu Kaifeng with big, expressive eyes before looking down again, the very image of a scolded puppy.

"Remember, you just had a high fever a few days ago," Gu Kaifeng reminded him, finishing up with the towel before playfully ruffling his still slightly damp hair. "Go find the hairdryer."

"Where is it?" Lin Feiran asked, looking a bit disoriented after the brisk towelling, more puppy-like than ever.

Gu Kaifeng plugged in the hairdryer and handed it to him. "Here. I'm off to shower."

Lin Feiran gently caught Gu Kaifeng's wrist. "Make it fast."

Gu Kaifeng's reply was shamelessly flirtatious. "In a rush? Going to miss me?"

"Not really," Lin Feiran said seriously, his gaze firm. "We've wasted enough time. Hurry up and shower so we can get to our homework."

*In this world, only knowledge can bring me joy!*

Gu Kaifeng fought the urge to kiss Lin Feiran's adorable face. "Alright, alright, ten minutes."

*Ten minutes? That's like an eternity...* Lin Feiran had observed that each physical contact with Gu Kaifeng granted him about five minutes of ghost-free peace—a fleeting and insufficient relief. Relying on Gu Kaifeng's yang energy as a ghost deterrent wasn't a long-term solution. He couldn't be glued to Gu Kaifeng forever. Over the past few days, Lin Feiran had used his Yin-yang Eye ability to assess his classmates and teachers, but none had yang energy as strong as Gu Kaifeng's. There seemed to be no alternative shield.

After drying his hair, Lin Feiran felt his ghost-free time slipping away. He approached the bathroom door anxiously, heart racing. Pressing his ear against it, he was ready to burst in to touch Gu Kaifeng at the first sign of a ghost...

From the outside, his behaviour could have looked suspiciously like that of a peeping Tom!

Lin Feiran tried to calm himself. Maybe there weren't any ghosts in Gu Kaifeng's house, or at least not that many. He decided not to barge into the bathroom unless it was absolutely necessary... Just as he was reassuring himself, a chilling wave of

yin energy[7] swept over him. He tensed and flinched away from the bathroom doorknob, trembling. He kept his eyes glued to his hands, too scared to look around.

Then he heard it—An old, raspy voice, like someone in their seventies or eighties, echoed nearby. The voice coughed a few times before weakly saying, "Grandfather, this is the little friend Kaifeng has brought home."

Hearing such an old voice calling someone else "grandfather," Lin Feiran was taken aback for a moment.

*Could it be the Gu family ancestors?!*

Another elderly voice commented, "It's the first time Kaifeng has brought a friend home, and a boy at that."

Then another ghostly, aged voice chimed in, "Why is he lingering by the door while Kaifeng is in the shower?"

Lin Feiran's face flushed with embarrassment and fear. His heart raced as he was caught in a dilemma, torn between entering the bathroom and the shame of doing so. As he grappled with his decision, the ghostly ancestor addressed as "grandfather" spoke again, "My great-grandson, see what this young boy is up to. The ninth generation's sole heir of our old Gu family shouldn't be..."

*Damn, please, don't come to me!* Lin Feiran's panic surged as he heard ghostly footsteps drawing near. Acting on impulse, he

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7 Yin energy: In contrast to "yang energy", if a place, a person, or an object has a heavy "yin energy", it would give off feelings of coldness, eeriness, discomfort, oppression, and dullness. Prolonged exposure to such elements can exhaust one's yang energy, leading to various problems in both physical health and personal fortunes.

pushed open the bathroom door and stepped inside.

Behind the shower curtain, the sound of running water continued. Lin Feiran inched closer, cautiously...

During his shower, Gu Kaifeng noticed the shower curtain being carefully pulled aside. Lin Feiran's face peeked through, his cheeks puffed up in mild annoyance. He extended a finger and pressed it against Gu Kaifeng's chest.

Internally, Lin Feiran was dying of embarrassment, but he managed to keep a composed facade. "Just checking if you're done," he said, trying to sound casual.

Yet he lingered there, not budging.

After intruding like a stalker and getting an eyeful of the Gu family's ninth generation's sole heir, Lin Feiran really did not want to face the Gu family's esteemed ancestors again!

"Like what you see?" Gu Kaifeng teased, flexing his muscles a bit. His regular workouts had sculpted a lean, muscular build on him, giving him a mature look. However, his wrists, collarbones, and waist still looked young and delicate, making for an impressive sight.

Lin Feiran froze for a moment before quickly shutting the shower curtain.

*Showing off much? Are muscles really that big of a deal?* Lin Feiran muttered under his breath, indignantly clutching his chest and fiercely wiping his face. His heart was pounding with irritation at Gu Kaifeng's display, flaunting his physique as if he were a peacock...

*Yeah, my flushed face and racing heart are just due to annoyance, nothing more!*

Even after absorbing yang energy, Lin Feiran stood hesitantly at the bathroom door, reluctant to leave. Even though he couldn't hear or see the ghosts at the moment, he was sure the Gu family's ancestors were still gossiping about him. Deciding not to leave just yet, he retreated and dejectedly sat down on the toilet seat, his brow furrowed with worry.

*Curse this unwanted ability.* He thought, sighing like an old man. *I need to visit my hometown next weekend. But what can I say to get Gu Kaifeng to come along?*

"What are you doing?" Gu Kaifeng's voice suddenly cut through Lin Feiran's thoughts as he pulled back the shower curtain, rinsing off the last bits of soap. Seeing Lin Feiran sitting there, chin in hands, with a stunned look, he teased, "Were you waiting to catch a glimpse of me fresh out of the shower?"

"No, I was just..." Lin Feiran stammered, scrambling for an excuse. He averted his gaze and slowly stood up, mustering his courage to finally open the door and step outside.

The hallway was quiet. Lin Feiran paused by the bathroom door with a troubled look, too embarrassed to go back inside, yet too scared to leave his "shield". Minutes later, the shower stopped, and the sound of the curtain being drawn back echoed in the air. Gu Kaifeng's footsteps approached the door, growing louder before pausing. He was likely drying off and getting dressed.

For Lin Feiran, Gu Kaifeng's impending exit from the bathroom wasn't enough comfort. A wave of cold yin energy crept up from his feet, chilling him to the core. His Yin-yang Eye ability activated, revealing three wrinkled, aged faces, so close they were almost touching his. One was mere centimetres from his

face. An elderly voice muttered, "My eyesight isn't what it used to be. Even this close, it's hard to see clearly..."

They were trying to get a better look at him!

"Ah..." Lin Feiran gasped, barely stifling a scream. The sudden proximity was too much. He covered his mouth with his hand, his heart pounding. He thought about running back into the bathroom for safety, but one of the ghostly elders was hovering right by the door. The idea of passing through the ghost, experiencing that intense, bone-chilling cold, froze him in place. With a rush of adrenaline, he turned and ran the other way, driven by a single thought—to get as far away from these ancestral ghosts as possible.

Lin Feiran, his face pale with fright, stumbled back a few steps before he saw a small golden head peek around the corner of the hallway. It was Xiaxia, the Yorkie, clutching a dog toy in his mouth and radiating yang energy as brilliant as molten gold, rivalling even Gu Kaifeng's!

*Good heavens! The yang energy this dog radiated was astonishing!* Lin Feiran's face brightened with excitement, like a hungry wolf spotting its first meal in a long time. He quickly lunged forward, scooped up the startled Xiaxia, who seemed ready to bolt, and held him close.

The moment Lin Feiran made contact with Xiaxia, the icy sensation within him melted away. He glanced back to see that the ghostly ancestors had disappeared.

"Woof woof!" Xiaxia's button-like eyes widened in shock. His bow tie became crooked in the scuffle as he barked and wriggled, trying to escape Lin Feiran's grasp.

"It's okay, don't be scared... I don't eat dogs..." Lin Feiran real-

ized he must have appeared quite frightening. He gently relaxed his grip, cradling the trembling Xiaxia in one arm and soothingly petting his head with the other.

As Lin Feiran patted Xiaxia, the bow tie came loose, much to the dismay of the prim and proper Xiaxia. "Woof! Woof woof woof!" Xiaxia barked in protest.

"Sorry..." Lin Feiran apologized, picking up the bow tie and clumsily trying to tie it back on. This small act of kindness seemed to comfort Xiaxia, who gradually stopped struggling and nestled quietly in Lin Feiran's arms.

A sense of relief washed over Lin Feiran. He realized animals could also be sources of yang energy. Maybe he could find a pet with strong yang energy, like a hamster, to serve as his own personal ghost shield in the dormitory. That way, he wouldn't always need to depend on Gu Kaifeng... With this revelation, Lin Feiran's previously sombre mood brightened considerably, and he looked at Xiaxia with newfound affection.

When Gu Kaifeng stepped out of the bathroom, he was greeted by the sight of a joyous Lin Feiran twirling around with Xiaxia in his arms. After a few playful spins, Lin Feiran stopped, his eyes sparkling with happiness, and gently kissed Xiaxia on the forehead.

"I'm finished with the shower," Gu Kaifeng announced, walking over with a mischievous smile. He took Xiaxia from Lin Feiran's arms and charmingly mimicked Lin Feiran's earlier gesture, kissing Xiaxia on the forehead right where Lin Feiran had.

Xiaxia basked in the attention, blissfully unaware of his role in the indirect kiss between his elder brother and brother-in-law.

Lin Feiran, feeling an unusual flutter in his chest, quickly averted his gaze to the wall, pretending not to notice Gu Kaifeng's actions. He spoke with earnest intent, "We really should start our homework now."

The last thing he wanted was to give the Gu family's ancestors the impression that he was leading their beloved ninth-generation sole heir astray!

Gu Kaifeng gently placed Xiaxia on the floor, his gaze lingering on Lin Feiran thoughtfully. The pyjamas, a tad too large for Lin Feiran, loosely framed his delicate collarbones. The glimpse of his fair neck and defined chin quickened Gu Kaifeng's heartbeat, stirring a yearning to pull this charming Lin—his little sticky rice cake—Feiran close and retreat to the sanctuary of his bed.

With an intense, wolf-like look in his eyes, Gu Kaifeng softly suggested, "Let's study together tomorrow. How about we head to bed now?"

Lin Feiran, who had just lifted Xiaxia, his newfound personal shield, off the floor, was oblivious to Gu Kaifeng's intense gaze and innocently responded, "It's only nine. Are you tired already?"

*I don't want to sleep. I just want to hold you.* Gu Kaifeng took a deep breath, reigning in his emotions, and replied, "Okay, let's study a bit first."

Lin Feiran, with Xiaxia in his arms, followed Gu Kaifeng into the study. The desk, initially bought by Gu Kaifeng's father for office work was rarely used, so it had become Gu Kaifeng's personal study workspace. It was spacious, with ample room for books and stationery, creating a cosy atmosphere perfect for

studying. Gu Kaifeng cleared a sizeable area on the desk for Lin Feiran and brought over another swivel chair. They sat side by side, much like their arrangement at school. Lin Feiran carefully organized his homework in the order he planned to tackle it and opened his math workbook, murmuring, "Need to get through pages forty-six to fifty..."

Amused by Lin Feiran's earnest demeanour, Gu Kaifeng mirrored his actions, neatly arranging his homework and flipping his math workbook to page forty-six.

Catching on that Gu Kaifeng was also starting with math, Lin Feiran suggested with enthusiasm, "Let's see who can finish first?"

"Sure," Gu Kaifeng passed Lin Feiran a few sheets of printer paper for calculations. "Let's start."

Lin Feiran patted Xiaxia, who was comfortably nestled in his lap, and playfully said, "Be good, Gu Kaifeng's little brother."

Xiaxia let out a soft noise, happily gnawing on his toy.

The room fell into a peaceful rhythm, punctuated only by the sound of pens scratching across paper. Lin Feiran dived into his assignments, quickly working through the twelve multiple-choice questions. He couldn't resist sneaking a peek at Gu Kaifeng's progress, noticing he was lagging at question eleven. A triumphant smirk crossed Lin Feiran's face as he moved on to the fill-in-the-blank section.

Lin Feiran hadn't needed to touch Gu Kaifeng for the past twenty minutes, thanks to Xiaxia's presence keeping his Yin-yang Eye at bay. He gave the dog a few more affectionate pats, a content smile spreading across his face.

Catching this, Gu Kaifeng playfully nudged Lin Feiran's knee

with his own, teasing, "Why aren't you flirting with me anymore?"

Feeling bolder with Xiaxia by his side, Lin Feiran maintained a deadpan expression and retorted, "I don't normally flirt with you, anyway."

To emphasize his point, he scooted his chair a good ten centimetres away from Gu Kaifeng.

"Come back here," Gu Kaifeng chuckled, a playful annoyance in his tone. He reached over, pulling Lin Feiran's chair back until their workspace was shared again. Now, they were close enough for their arms and legs to brush with the slightest movement.

"Isn't it a bit cramped, being this close with such a big desk?" Lin Feiran grumbled, but his complaints fell on deaf ears as Gu Kaifeng kept pulling him back whenever he tried to create some distance.

Gu Kaifeng, with a hint of irritation, said, "Moving away again?"

"Stop it," Lin Feiran quickly shot back.

Gu Kaifeng's gaze sharpened a bit. "Denying how clingy you usually are?"

"That's just your imagination," Lin Feiran retorted unyieldingly.

*Is my usually clingy little rice cake trying to keep his distance? That's not a good sign.*

Testing a harmless threat, Gu Kaifeng teased, "Stay put. Try running away again, and you might just find yourself on my lap."

Lin Feiran's cheeks turned a deep red. He tried to defuse the flirtation in Gu Kaifeng's words. "Aren't you worried I'll crush

your legs?"

Gu Kaifeng shot back with a grin, "Wanna try?"

"Just focus on our work. I'm already two questions ahead." Lin Feiran changed the topic, his blush intensifying. Resigned to his position and wary of Gu Kaifeng's playful threat, he dove back into his homework, his pen flying across the paper.

Gu Kaifeng closed his workbook with a stretch of his arms about an hour later, signalling the completion of his assignment. Lin Feiran, still grappling with the final problem, furrowed his brows in deep concentration. His hand moved swiftly as he tried to hide his embarrassment. Xiaxia, on the other hand, was peacefully asleep in his lap.

Gu Kaifeng quietly went downstairs and returned with a plate of freshly sliced fruits. He peeled a grape and offered it to Lin Feiran, coaxing, "Here, try this."

Absorbed in thought, Lin Feiran took the grape without thinking, his lips inadvertently grazing Gu Kaifeng's fingertips.

Gu Kaifeng pulled back his hand, licked his finger and murmured, "Sweet."

Lin Feiran, mistaking the comment for being about the grape, responded without looking up, "Yeah, it's pretty good."

Gu Kaifeng continued to peel more grapes, feeding them to Lin Feiran while deliberately brushing his fingers against his lips. The gentle contact got Gu Kaifeng a bit carried away, and his actions became more daring. With the next grape, Lin Feiran suddenly leaned in and playfully nibbled on his finger.

Surprised, Gu Kaifeng pulled his hand back with a soft laugh. "Teasing me now, huh?"

Lin Feiran glared back, baring his teeth in a playful snarl.

"Careful, I might just bite."

Seeing Lin Feiran ruffled by his teasing, Gu Kaifeng smoothly shifted the conversation. "Stuck on the last problem?" he asked, leaning in to look at Lin Feiran's workbook.

"Mhm..." Lin Feiran dragged out his response, his frustration was evident. "I've figured out the first two parts, but the last part's so tricky. I'm close to cracking it, though."

Having been in the lead for most of the study session, Lin Feiran was visibly irked at being tripped up by the final question, a setback that now put him behind, his tail drooping in defeat.

"Need a hint?" Gu Kaifeng offered.

Lin Feiran was set on figuring it out alone. "No, I can handle it."

Checking at the clock, Gu Kaifeng suggested, "It's late. Why not take a break and come back to it with fresh eyes in the morning?"

Lin Feiran remained determined. "No way, I'm staying up. I'm going to pursue cultivation."

Cultivate his mathematics skills that was!

After gently moving the dozing Xiaxia from Lin Feiran's lap, Gu Kaifeng placed the puppy in his dog bed. He then closed Lin Feiran's workbook with a firm hand, chuckling as he noticed Lin Feiran's drooping eyelids. "You're barely keeping your eyes open yet you insist on staying up. Let's call it a night and start fresh at seven tomorrow."

"No! You're already done..." Lin Feiran protested, his competitive spirit still alive. He reached to reopen the workbook, but in a swift move, Gu Kaifeng scooped him up like a kitten.

One arm supported his back while the other cradled his knees, effortlessly carrying him towards the bedroom.

"Hey!" Lin Feiran's protest came out more out of surprise than anger.

"It's rest time. I'll wake you early," Gu Kaifeng reassured him, nudging the bedroom door open with his foot and gently laying Lin Feiran on the king-sized bed. Leaning in close, his arms propped on either side of Lin Feiran, Gu Kaifeng whispered, "Be good."

They were close enough to feel each other's breath and see the minute expressions on each other's faces. After a moment of stunned silence, Lin Feiran's heart raced. He conceded, "Okay, fine. Goodnight."

Lin Feiran gave a brief nod and quickly turned on his side, shutting his eyes as if to emphasize his readiness for sleep. Gu Kaifeng affectionately flicked Lin Feiran's reddened earlobe, tucked the blanket around him, then stepped back to switch off the lights.

Seconds later, Lin Feiran popped back up from under the blanket. "Um... could I maybe take Xiaxia and sleep in the guest room?" he asked, his voice tinged with uncertainty.

Gu Kaifeng's face remained unreadable as he firmly replied, "No," and turned off the lights, leaving no room for further discussion.

Lin Feiran, clutching the corner of the blanket, squinted through the dimness at Gu Kaifeng's silhouette approaching. "Why not?"

"The guest room's been unused for a while. It's probably dusty," Gu Kaifeng answered nonchalantly. "Planning to clean

it?"

Lin Feiran's domestic skills were limited to simple tasks like laundry, befitting the pampered young master he was at home. He settled back under the covers and hesitated before trying another approach. "Can Xiaxia at least share your bed with me?"

Gu Kaifeng slid under the blanket beside him. "Dogs aren't allowed on my bed," he said firmly.

Lin Feiran turned away, presenting his back to Gu Kaifeng. His response was quiet, almost sulkingly, a stark contrast to his recent discreet attempts to stay close to Gu Kaifeng in bed.

"What's up with you tonight?" Gu Kaifeng teased, lightly poking Lin Feiran's waist, knowing his ticklish spots.

"Hahaha, stop that!" Lin Feiran squirmed, trying to fend off Gu Kaifeng's hand. With his back still turned, he grumbled, "I'm fine, really. Just tired."

While talking, Lin Feiran, with his mind in turmoil, slipped his hand into his pants for a quick touch.

His long-neglected little Lin was standing tall like a flagpole!

Yes, just being carried in Gu Kaifeng's arms from the study to the bedroom and then being gently pinned to the bed by him had given Lin Feiran an erection.

*Are you insane, Little Lin? Why on earth are you getting hard in front of him? Is it because you've been feeling neglected and now you're desperate? Why didn't you get hard a few days ago when I was eating Lao Gan Ma chilli sauce? Come on, say something!* He internally scolded his overly enthusiastic little buddy.

"What are your hands fussing about down there?" Gu Kaifeng asked, sensing something amiss. He gently turned Lin Feiran over by the shoulder and quickly glanced under the blanket.

"I wasn't doing anything." Lin Feiran was startled. He hastily withdrew his hand from his underwear and pulled the blanket back up. His face heated up with a blush that was fortunately hidden in the darkness. "Time to sleep."

His blush might have been concealed in the darkness, but the sudden movement didn't escape Gu Kaifeng's notice. With a teasing chuckle, Gu Kaifeng prodded, "Were you...?"

Lin Feiran quickly crossed his legs and interrupted, "Nothing!"

"I have some videos. Wanna watch?" Gu Kaifeng whispered, leaning in closer.

"No! Do your fangirls know how obscene you are?" Lin Feiran shot back, trying to sound annoyed, but his heart was beating out of his chest.

He was just like those porn-peddling vendors on the streets!

"What's so obscene about it? What kind of guy wouldn't have watched before? Or are you saying you've never watched any?" Gu Kaifeng teased.

"I've seen them, but they're not my thing," Lin Feiran replied, sounding a bit annoyed as he turned his back to Gu Kaifeng again.

He had watched such videos a few times out of curiosity but never found them particularly interesting or appealing. They didn't excite him. In fact, they often seemed more funny than anything else. He figured he just wasn't as interested in those things, perhaps because of his low libido.

Gu Kaifeng, finding Lin Feiran's reactions endearing, couldn't resist teasing him a bit more. Leaning in closer, he whispered with a hint of mischief, "The stuff I watch is a bit different than

what you might be thinking of."

Well, there was indeed quite a difference between a man and a woman and two men.

"I'm not watching anything," Lin Feiran declared as he turned around, pushing Gu Kaifeng's chest with a flustered expression. "Back off, back off! Give me some space. There's plenty of space on this bed."

Gu Kaifeng moved a bit further away, a knowing smirk on his lips as he observed Lin Feiran's stiff posture in the dim moonlight.

The mix of embarrassment and tension helped Lin Feiran's sexual arousal fade away, his thoughts shifting from an embarrassing physiological reaction back to his concerns about seeing ghosts. After a while, Lin Feiran, who had been insistent on distance, tentatively turned back towards Gu Kaifeng. Seeing Gu Kaifeng asleep, he cautiously extended his leg and lightly rested it against Gu Kaifeng's calf.

A small smile curled at the corner of Gu Kaifeng's lips, though his eyes remained closed.

Noticing no reaction from Gu Kaifeng, Lin Feiran grew bolder and snuggled closer. He finally settled into a comfortable position and drifted off to sleep.

# Chapter 07

Lin Feiran was up early on Sunday, determined to crack that math problem. Breakfast was ready, thanks to the domestic helper, Ms Zhang, for preparing it and Gu Kaifeng for bringing it to the study.

Gu Kaifeng cut the fried egg, breakfast sausage, and buttered toast into neat, bite-sized pieces. He picked up a piece with a fork and offered it to Lin Feiran. "Try this."

Deep in his calculations, Lin Feiran didn't even look up but obediently opened his mouth.

After being spoon-fed several bites by Gu Kaifeng, Lin Feiran triumphantly set down his pen. "The answer to part three is six, isn't it?"

A small smile played on Gu Kaifeng's lips. "Spot on."

Lin Feiran beamed with pride, snapping his fingers and whistling softly in victory.

Gu Kaifeng craftily showered him with praise, "Honestly, I've seen this type of problem before, or else, I wouldn't have known

the answer. You're the real whiz here."

"Hehe, I wouldn't say that. You're pretty smart too," Lin Feiran replied, modestly scratching his nose but barely concealing his grin. His tail was high up in delight.

"Have breakfast first." Gu Kaifeng suggested with a playful glint in his eye. "Want me to keep feeding you?"

"I got it," Lin Feiran quickly replied, picking up an egg piece himself. "Physics is next. Ready for a showdown?"

"You're on," Gu Kaifeng responded with a nod.

Rolling up his sleeves, Lin Feiran braced himself. "Watch out, I'm going to show you up in physics!"

Gu Kaifeng laughed, leaning back in the chair and stretching his arms out. "I'm ready. Go ahead and give it your best shot."

Lin Feiran shook his head, a playful tone in his voice. "You're crazy for thinking you can beat me," he muttered under his breath, nudging Gu Kaifeng's foot with his own.

And so, their Sunday unfolded in a lively battle of wits and homework.

Throughout the day, Lin Feiran and Xiaxia were practically inseparable. With Xiaxia's clingy nature, the pair resembled two sticky rice cakes, clinging to each other and defying any attempt to pull them apart. In stark contrast, Lin Feiran consistently avoided any voluntary contact with Gu Kaifeng. Instead, he chose to pet, cuddle, and even kiss Xiaxia, perfectly content with just Xiaxia in his lap. Overjoyed with this shower of affection, Xiaxia eventually found his favourite spot on Lin Feiran's foot, curled up and eagerly waiting for attention, completely ignoring Gu Kaifeng.

*Well, they used to be glued to me, but now both the dog and man have ditched me to become best buds.* Gu Kaifeng watched the duo with a blend of annoyance and amusement, feeling a twinge of jealousy towards Xiaxia. He found ways to stay close to Lin Feiran, such as pulling his chair near and creating excuses for casual touches. Their knees would bump, elbows would brush, and Gu Kaifeng would playfully ruffle Lin Feiran's hair. He always found a reason to make contact!

Lin Feiran, meanwhile, was slightly puzzled by Gu Kaifeng's behaviour. *I touch you to ward off ghosts, but why are you being so touchy-feely?*

As evening arrived and their homework was completed, it was time to prepare for the return to school. After a hearty dinner, they packed their belongings. While Gu Kaifeng busied himself with refilling Xiaxia's food and water bowls, Lin Feiran stood solemnly in front of the ancestral sword, clasping his hands in a respectful bow. "We're heading back to school now, Gu's great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather," he said. Then, worrying about getting the titles wrong, he cautiously amended his farewell, "Farewell... to all the ancestors of Gu family..."

After his encounters with the ancestral ghosts, it felt like the proper thing to do.

Gu Kaifeng walked back in, grabbed his school bag and raised an eyebrow in amusement. "Who are you talking to?" he asked, noticing Lin Feiran's hasty posture change.

Lin Feiran quickly tucked his hands behind his back and brushed it off. "Oh, nobody. Just saying goodbye to the room."

Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng returned to school that evening,

ready for another week of studies. Their bond seemed even closer than before, appearing as if they were more than friends. They did everything together—attending classes, practising piano, sharing meals, and even personal routines like showering and sleeping. Lin Feiran was just as clingy towards Gu Kaifeng as he was the previous week.

As the week flew by, the much-awaited arts festival was upon them that Thursday. By half-past one in the afternoon, the school auditorium buzzed with excitement. Teachers and students alike filled the venue, eager for the performances. The stage was set, and all the performers were quickly wrapping up to get on stage. The girls delicately touched up their makeup while the boys styled their hair with care.

In the midst of it all was Gu Kaifeng, looking dapper in a sharply tailored dark suit. He leaned with an easy grace against the wall, one hand in his trouser pocket, the other clutching the printed sheets of his speech. He murmured his opening lines under his breath, fine-tuning his delivery.

Just then, Lin Feiran stepped out of the changing room. He quickly walked over to Gu Kaifeng and gave him a gentle nudge before absorbing a needed breath of yang energy.

Gu Kaifeng looked up, his gaze fluttering slightly.

Lin Feiran, clad in a black formal suit with a high-collared white shirt and bow tie, exuded an air of unexpected elegance. His hair, slightly longer than usual after avoiding a trim for half a month despite the discipline master's disapproving glances, draped elegantly over his forehead, casting a mysterious shadow over his eyes. This touch of melancholy contrasted with his usual upbeat vibe, especially under the dim backstage lights.

The tailored suit hugged his frame perfectly and highlighted his charm. Every detail of the suit—from the high-end fabric to the precision-cut cuffs to the gleaming buttons—accentuated his sophisticated air, a clear departure from his usual adorkable self.

Gu Kaifeng was momentarily struck speechless by the transformation. He swallowed hard, his Adam's apple bobbing, as he took in the sight of Lin Feiran in his performance attire.

Lin Feiran, fishing for a compliment, twirled in front of Gu Kaifeng. With an expectant look, he asked, "How do I look in this suit?"

Internally, he was begging, *Tell me I look amazing!*

Gu Kaifeng's gaze softened as he took in Lin Feiran's appearance. "You look incredible. That suit is a perfect fit for you."

Lin Feiran's eyes lit up with the praise. "Thanks. You're not looking too shabby yourself today."

Gu Kaifeng quirked an eyebrow playfully. "Maybe, but not as sharp as you."

Lin Feiran bloomed with happiness, but he maintained a composed façade and responded, "Oh, come on. You're being too modest. You are, after all, the heartthrob of our school."

Gu Kaifeng's voice took on a teasing lilt. "Perhaps, but have you noticed the artistic aura you're radiating? Sure, there are plenty of good-looking people around, but it's hard to find someone who blends aesthetics with artistic sensibility like you do."

Lin Feiran's cheeks flushed as he brushed off the compliment, feigning indifference. "Oh, it's nothing special," he said, rubbing his nose and struggling to hide his smile.

Gu Kaifeng, not missing a beat, added, "Really, you've caught

everyone's attention today. You should have seen the way the girls were glancing your way." His eyes danced with mischief, but Lin Feiran, too wrapped up in his bashfulness, missed it and shyly averted his gaze. By the time Gu Kaifeng finished his praise, Lin Feiran couldn't help but beam, turning his face away from Gu Kaifeng and giggling at the prop box. His tail betrayed his inner joy. It was wagging so high that it even revealed *that* underneath.

Though Gu Kaifeng couldn't see Lin Feiran's face, he could imagine his reaction. He knew the effect his words had. He allowed himself a brief, sly grin before quickly switching back to an innocent look as Lin Feiran turned around again.

"Someone's calling me. Need to check my hair," Lin Feiran said, nodding towards Xue Jieling. He walked away with a hop in his step, brimming with confidence. As he moved, he found himself wondering why he ever harboured negative feelings towards Gu Kaifeng.

*He is such a good guy. What's wrong with me before?* Lin Feiran mused, reflecting on his past misconceptions.

At the same time, Wang Yao, the female emcee for the arts festival, approached Gu Kaifeng with her script in hand. Dressed elegantly in a formal gown with her natural beauty enhanced by makeup and a stylish hairstyle, she drew admiring glances from the boys nearby. The notable exceptions were Lin Feiran, who was too busy checking his hair with his phone's camera, and Gu Kaifeng, whose gaze was fixed on Lin Feiran.

Wang Yao's eyes narrowed as she pieced things together.

She had once harboured a mild crush on Gu Kaifeng but

quickly sensed his indifference and stepped back. Accustomed to attention, she'd felt a twinge of disappointment. Now, seeing Gu Kaifeng's unwavering attention on Lin Feiran, any residual feelings she had faded away instantly.

*If I'm not blind, they're gay, aren't they? That explains everything!*

"Shall we run through our opening lines?" Wang Yao suggested, standing confidently beside Gu Kaifeng.

Gu Kaifeng withdrew his intense gaze that could've burned a hole through Lin Feiran and agreed. "Sure, let's start."

Lin Feiran sat still as the Xue Jieling meticulously styled his hair. A sudden chill crept up his spine from being away from Gu Kaifeng for more than five minutes. Glancing in the mirror, he froze at the sight of a female ghost's reflection. Her body was intact, dressed in elaborate theatrical attire, with her pinky raised in an elegant arch. She was actually quite beautiful, but her complexion was ghostly pale while her lips were blood-red, an unsettling image.

Their eyes met in the mirror, and the ghost offered a mischievous smile. She began to mimic Lin Feiran's actions. When he widened his eyes in shock, she did the same. As Lin Feiran bit his lip, stifling a scream, she copied him, feigning fear.

*What a drama queen!* Her playful mimicry only added to the encounter's eeriness, leaving Lin Feiran awestruck and apprehensive.

Trembling slightly, Lin Feiran mustered his courage and asked Xue Jieling, "Are we done yet?"

The ghost, imitating his tone, stood up and acted. "Are we

done yet? Oh, no, there's a ghost in the mirror. I'm so scared!" She fake sobbed, rubbing at her eyes. She saw right through his unspoken terror!

Lin Feiran clamped his mouth shut, overwhelmed.

Xue Jieling finished styling his hair, smiling proudly at him. "All set! You look great."

"Thank you," Lin Feiran managed to say, his voice tight with nerves. He turned hastily and made his way to Gu Kaifeng, accidentally knocking over a chair in his hurry.

The ghost in the mirror burst into laughter, teasingly calling out, "Hahaha, what a cutie!"

Lin Feiran, the subject of her amusement, was left speechless.

While Gu Kaifeng was rehearsing lines with Wang Yao, Lin Feiran suddenly came over. His expression was stern with a penetrating gaze fixed onto Gu Kaifeng. He marched over and gave Gu Kaifeng a solid pat on the shoulder.

*Phew, safe at last!* Lin Feiran exhaled in relief, standing just a breath away from Gu Kaifeng, his heart still racing.

Gu Kaifeng saw Lin Feiran's tense state and then glanced at the composed Wang Yao before quickly piecing things together.

*He's jealous*, Gu Kaifeng thought, a wave of fondness washing over him.

Gu Kaifeng gently squeezed Lin Feiran's fingertips before turning to Wang Yao. "I think we've practised enough. We're ready to go." Wang Yao nodded in agreement. "Let's take a short break. We're up in five minutes."

Gu Kaifeng and Lin Feiran settled into adjacent seats. Oblivious to how Gu Kaifeng and Wang Yao perceived him, Lin Feiran practised playing the piano on his lap, his fingers gracefully

dancing over invisible keys as he mentally revisited the piece.

Amused by Lin Feiran's attempt to act nonchalant despite his obvious jealousy, Gu Kaifeng playfully nudged his knee. "What's on your mind?"

Lin Feiran responded earnestly, "Just rehearsing my piece."

He hadn't considered the length of the piano piece when he signed up, and he definitely did not expect to run into challenges posed by his Yin-yang Eye. The piece was six minutes long, and even at a brisk tempo, it would be a tight squeeze to finish within five minutes, including stage entrance and exit. Glancing toward the stage, Lin Feiran sought assurance, "You'll be there, right, when I start playing?" It was crucial. He needed Gu Kaifeng's yang energy the moment he stepped off the stage. *I must act swiftly and decisively!*

"Of course," Gu Kaifeng assured him softly, "I'll be right there watching over you."

The simple-minded Lin Feiran felt a wave of relief wash over him, blissfully unaware of the devoted attention he'd captured from his admirer.

The arts festival was in full swing.

As the ninth act, Lin Feiran's piano solo was up next. After the modern dance performance ended, Gu Kaifeng took the stage to introduce Lin Feiran. "Next, we welcome Lin Feiran, from Grade 11, Class 4, for his piano solo..."

Backstage, Lin Feiran was a bundle of nerves and excitement, ready to captivate the audience.

As Gu Kaifeng concluded the introduction and exited the stage, the lights in the auditorium dimmed. Stagehands then

wheeled the grand piano into the spotlight. Lin Feiran took his position at the edge of the stage with Gu Kaifeng nearby for moral support. As the stage lights began to brighten, Lin Feiran reached out for a quick yang energy boost from Gu Kaifeng. However, before he could make contact, Gu Kaifeng playfully gave him an affectionate pat on the butt.

The surprise touch sent a flush of warmth up Lin Feiran's ears, causing him to freeze up. "Go get'em, little prince," Gu Kaifeng whispered, effectively bolstering his confidence.

Feeling an odd weakness in his knees, Lin Feiran's steps towards the piano were light, as if he were walking on marshmallows. It wasn't until he bowed to the audience and sat at the piano that he regained full control of his nerves.

*It's just stage jitters, nothing more.* Lin Feiran reassured himself, still oblivious to the deeper reality. Pushing aside any distractions, he inhaled deeply and began to play. His fingers danced over the keys, filling the auditorium with the piano's rich, resonant tones, each note flowing crystal-clear. The subdued stage lighting, punctuated by a single bright spotlight on Lin Feiran and the piano, highlighted his graceful form and added to his allure. His hair, under the glare of the bright lights, appeared soft and fluffy, almost begging to be touched.

He had such a powerful presence when he played the piano. The auditorium fell into a hushed silence, and all attention riveted on the figure at the piano, including Gu Kaifeng's.

*Damn, why is he so captivating...* Gu Kaifeng mused, his gaze fixed on Lin Feiran, whose slender figure was elegantly outlined by the tuxedo. He swallowed hard, Adam's apple bobbing as he struggled to keep his feelings from bursting.

Engulfed in the depth of his performance, Lin Feiran nearly lost track of time. But as he neared the end of the piece, a chilling sensation began to crawl up his spine.

*Not this again...* He shuddered inwardly, determined to keep his focus on the piano keys, but now, they appeared horrifically stained with blood. The once pristine keys were now marred by a grotesque crimson, as if dark, thick blood was slowly oozing down the piano and pooling on the stage. Drip, drip, drip. Like playing on the ice, the tainted keys turned cold. Their sinister, chilling yin energy numbed his fingers. However, he was only four bars away from finishing.

Lin Feiran closed his eyes wilfully, pretending to be lost in the melody. He clenched his teeth against the creeping terror, exerting a vigorous intensity. His fingers pressed down on the ghastly, blood-soaked keys for the final notes.

The moment the piece ended, Lin Feiran swiftly rose from the bench, his fear thinly veiled. He forced himself to open his eyes to acknowledge the audience—a mix of the living and the dead—with a bow. As he turned to exit, a brief glance revealed a male ghost partially fused with the piano. The ghost's torso emerged through the lid, his head bowed to obscure his face, and his lifeless arms hung over the keys, ending in dark, blood-like tendrils. Those grotesque, dark red shapes were his hands and the source of the blood!

Alarmed, Lin Feiran averted his gaze and headed backstage during the applause. In the wings, bathed in a comforting golden light, stood Gu Kaifeng, his smile both reassuring and mesmerizing.

A fleeting, elusive thought passed through Lin Feiran's mind

as he approached Gu Kaifeng. When using his Yin-yang Eye, he usually focused on the yang energy enveloping Gu Kaifeng, often neglecting to notice his expressions or features. It was like a person so desperate for water in a desert that they paid no heed to the vessel holding it.

*Damn, what am I even thinking?* Lin Feiran mentally scolded himself, hastily reaching out to Gu Kaifeng to absorb the much-needed yang energy.

Gu Kaifeng responded by encircling Lin Feiran's slim waist with his arms. With a resolute expression, he said, "Wait here," before releasing him to return to the stage for the next announcement.

Recharged with yang energy, Lin Feiran stood there, a trace of confusion in his expression.

*What am I waiting for?*

Gu Kaifeng quickly finished the announcements and hurried back to Lin Feiran. Without warning, he caught Lin Feiran, who was like a hamster looking at him with big, innocent eyes, in a playful embrace and spun him around three times.

"Hey! What are you doing?" Lin Feiran blurted out, a mix of surprise and dizziness in his voice.

After the spinning ceased, Gu Kaifeng affectionately tapped Lin Feiran's nose and smiled warmly. "You were amazing out there."

Regaining his balance, Lin Feiran responded with a grateful, shy smile, "Thanks."

The atmosphere around them seemed to shimmer with an unspoken connection. It was almost like there were tiny, pink bubbles floating in the air. Their classmates watched with vari-

ous expressions from bemused to envious. Yet, Lin Feiran, still buzzing from his performance and the ghostly encounter, did not notice the mood of the moment.

As the grand piano was wheeled past him, Lin Feiran's gaze followed it. Though he couldn't see any ghosts anymore thanks to the yang energy, the haunting image of that male ghost lingered in his thoughts like a bittersweet feeling. The overwhelming fear was receding, like the tide pulling back, leaving behind a quiet revelation. He contemplated the ghost's attachment to the piano, realizing there must have been a profound love that endured beyond life, which kept him lingering there even after death. The sight of the ghost's deformed hands, the most precious tool for any pianist, filled Lin Feiran with heartache. He bit his lips, watching in silence as the piano was stowed away, its disappearance marked by the soft click of a closing door. For the first time, his feelings towards a ghost extended beyond fear.

Normally, performers would rejoin the audience after their act. Gu Kaifeng gestured towards where their classmates from Grade 11, Class 4, were seated. "Our class is over there. They saved you a seat. You going to join them?"

Lin Feiran shook his head, employing his "clingy tactics" on Gu Kaifeng. "Nah, I prefer staying backstage."

Gu Kaifeng, unsurprised by Lin Feiran's preference, smiled knowingly and fetched a chair for him. "Alright, get comfortable here then."

After the arts festival wrapped up at 5 p.m., Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng slipped back into their uniforms, grabbed dinner at the canteen, and made their way to evening study in their class-

room by 6 p.m. As they were getting settled, Wang Zhuo sauntered up with a mischievous smile. "Hey, Lin Feiran," he started.

Gu Kaifeng was quick to interject, "What's up? You looking for him?"

Wang Zhuo glanced at Gu Kaifeng, unfazed, and continued to speak to Lin Feiran, "It's about a girl from Class 3, my friend. She's been asking for your number."

Lin Feiran was about to speak when he was cut off by Gu Kaifeng. "Just tell her you don't have it. Why bother asking?"

Lin Feiran, the very person who the girl asked for, had yet to find an opportunity to chime in!

"Tsk tsk," Wang Zhuo, undeterred, shot back, "Ease up, Gu Kaifeng. Let Lin Feiran speak for himself."

Lin Feiran finally piped up, "Who's this girl from Class 3?"

Curiosity drove his question more than interest. Lin Feiran, despite being no stranger to attention since kindergarten, never seriously entertained the idea of a relationship. However, Wang Zhuo's comment had made him curious.

Wang Zhuo started to describe her, "The one who's slim, fair-skinned, with really long hair..." He was interrupted as Gu Kaifeng abruptly stood up, looking none too pleased, and walked over to the aisle where Wang Zhuo at. Gu Kaifeng slung an arm around his neck and steered him out of the classroom with surprising firmness.

Within seconds, Wang Zhuo's protests echoed from the corridor. "Aaaahhhh! Damn you, Gu Kaifeng!"

Lin Feiran was dumbfounded.

Wang Zhuo trudged back into the classroom shortly after, looking like a kicked puppy. He avoided Lin Feiran's gaze and

made his way to his seat near the back of the room. Pointing an accusing finger at Gu Kaifeng, he grumbled, "Man, you're ruthless!"

Gu Kaifeng sat back down, unfazed.

Lin Feiran nudged him. "Why did you cut Wang Zhuo off like that?"

Gu Kaifeng replied with a stern expression, "Just upholding the school's seventh rule. No getting too intimate with the opposite sex. I'm just keeping you out of trouble."

*That rule never applied to the same sex though!*

Feeling a tad sheepish about delving into relationship talk, Lin Feiran brushed it off with a grin. "I was just curious, no big deal." He playfully ruffled Gu Kaifeng's hair. "Speaking of rules, isn't your hair getting a bit long?"

Gu Kaifeng responded with a soft chuckle, returning the favour by tousling Lin Feiran's hair. "Yours is longer than mine, you know."

Lin Feiran puffed up his cheeks and blew his bangs upward. "I know, I need a haircut. The discipline master keeps giving me these looks. I'd rather not get sheared like a sheep on the podium in front of everyone."

Gu Kaifeng's eyes flickered towards the podium. He paused before speaking in a low voice, "I've got a few ideas about you at the podium. I want to press you down and... you right now."

Lin Feiran missed a word between "and" and "you". "Wait, what was that?" he asked as Gu Kaifeng sped through that part.

With a sly grin, Gu Kaifeng played innocent. "I said 'shave'. What did you think I said?"

*I must have heard the word wrong!* A bit red-faced, Lin Feiran

coughed and swiftly steered the conversation elsewhere. "How about we go for haircuts together this Saturday? You could use a trim too."

Gu Kaifeng brightened at the suggestion. "Sounds like a plan. A haircut and dinner afterwards."

"Deal," Lin Feiran agreed. His mind was already running through hairstyle options that wouldn't incur the discipline master's wrath.

The next two days whizzed by, and by Saturday evening, Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng were all set for their plans: haircut, dinner, and the arcade. At the arcade, Lin Feiran confidently challenged Gu Kaifeng to a game of basketball shoot-out. Though lacking in Gu Kaifeng's strength, Lin Feiran's keen aim and quick reflexes gave him an edge. He nailed basket after basket, besting Gu Kaifeng in several rounds to his delight.

"You're a sharpshooter," Gu Kaifeng remarked, wiping sweat from his brow and giving Lin Feiran a thumbs-up.

*Gu Kaifeng is becoming more endearing by the day!* Brimming with pride yet remaining modest, Lin Feiran replied, "I'm just okay. I played a bit during my first year of high school."

Basketball had been his attempt to grow taller, and while he didn't shoot up in height, he did become quite the ace at shooting hoops.

Gu Kaifeng playfully nudged him in the ribs. "Where's the height to show for it?"

Lin Feiran was momentarily taken aback.

*Actually, he's not so endearing after all!*

Gu Kaifeng quickly softened his teasing. Suddenly, he

stepped closer and wrapped his arms around Lin Feiran. "But this height is perfect for hugs," he said. Lin Feiran, being 10 centimetres shorter, came up to just the middle of his nose. With the small distance between them, Gu Kaifeng slightly tilted his chin up and inhaled the scent of Lin Feiran's freshly trimmed hair, the soft strands tickling his nose and stirring emotions in his heart.

"What's with the sniffing? You're not a dog." Lin Feiran, a bit startled, gently pushed Gu Kaifeng away and self-consciously patted his hair where it had been sniffed. He was too shy to look up but eager to shift the focus, so he fed more tokens into the arcade machine. "One more round, then let's head back. I'm beginning to miss Xiaxia."

Lin-little sticky rice cake-Feiran plotted with a sly grin. *If I just casually suggest going home together, then he can't refuse. My "clingy tactics" are foolproof.*

"Sure," Gu Kaifeng agreed, chuckling softly. "Actually, my parents are home tonight. Might be a good time for you to meet them."

*Awesome! Another weekend glued to Gu Kaifeng!* Lin Feiran, who had been slightly on edge since morning, felt relieved. With a bright smile, he asked. "Really? That sounds great! But are they okay with you bringing a classmate home?"

"They won't mind," Gu Kaifeng reassured him with a smirk. "They might actually be pretty pleased."

When they arrived at Gu Kaifeng's house around 9 p.m., they found his parents, Mr and Mrs Gu, seated comfortably on the living room couch as if waiting for them.

Lin Feiran entered the house with Gu Kaifeng, offering warm and respectful greetings. His upbringing had instilled in him to have good manners with others, and his polished and obedient demeanour made him especially endearing to the older folks, leaving a favourable impression on Gu Kaifeng's parents.

After some light conversation, Gu Kaifeng shifted to a more serious tone. "Dad, Mom, Feiran and I are going to study upstairs."

"Alright, but don't stay up too late," Mrs Gu reminded them gently. "Get some rest."

"No worries," Gu Kaifeng assured her, putting on his best "good boy" act.

Mrs Gu added, "And Feiran, feel free to use the south-facing guest room on the second floor with the nice view."

Gu Kaifeng, caught off guard, replied, "Thanks, Mom."

Lin Feiran raised an eyebrow in surprise too. *So much for that "dusty guest room" excuse, huh!*

Gu Kaifeng seemed to know Lin Feiran's unspoken grievances, so he gave Lin Feiran a sheepish yet playful smile. He then led the way upstairs, his school bag in one hand and Lin Feiran's wrist in the other, with Xiaxia happily trotting behind.

Once they were in the second-floor study, Lin Feiran wriggled free and faced Gu Kaifeng awkwardly. He wanted an explanation. "About what you said last time..."

Gu Kaifeng leaned in close, resting a hand on the wall behind Lin Feiran, his gaze intense yet twinkling with mischief. "Well, I lied," he admitted with a sly grin.

He locked gazes with Gu Kaifeng. Lin Feiran, feeling a flutter of unease, quickly crouched to scoop up Xiaxia. As he rubbed

the dog's fur, he half-teased, "Why lie? Were you that bored?" Before Gu Kaifeng could respond, Lin Feiran pulled a small trinket from his pocket and dangled it in front of Xiaxia, hurriedly changing the topic. "Look what I got for you."

Lin Feiran had impulsively bought a rhinestone-studded bow tie shaped like a bone during their evening stroll. It sparkled enticingly under the light, instantly grabbing Xiaxia's attention. The dog gave it a curious sniff and lick, then affectionately nuzzled Lin Feiran's hand, dislodging his usual pink bow in the process.

*I want to wear the new one, woof!* "You like it, huh?" Lin Feiran chuckled, securing the new bow tie on Xiaxia, who promptly scampered to the hallway mirror to admire his flashy new look.

As Lin Feiran moved to follow, Gu Kaifeng's hand caught his and pulled him back with a laugh. "Hey, where are you off to? We've got homework to do, remember?"

Earlier, in the heat of the moment, Gu Kaifeng had almost let his feelings take over when he cornered Lin Feiran against the wall. He only just remembered his parents were downstairs and decided it wasn't the time for a heartfelt confession.

To make a good first impression, they worked diligently in the study until eleven, with the only interruption being when Mrs Gu brought them snacks and chatted with Lin Feiran. During her visit, Gu Kaifeng couldn't resist playfully nudging Lin Feiran's foot under the table, causing him to blush and fluster. Mistaking his blush for shyness and an innately reserved nature, she left with an even higher opinion of Lin Feiran.

"Mom really likes you," Gu Kaifeng remarked after his moth-

er had left to go downstairs. He continued his footsie game under the table.

Lin Feiran responded with a light stomp, gritting his teeth as he retorted, "Stop that, will you? Do you have ADHD or something?"

"Says you." Gu Kaifeng shot back with a playful pinch to Lin Feiran's slim waist, glancing at Xiaxia, who was now curled up in Lin Feiran's lap. "You forget my existence the moment Xiaxia shows up. What, you prefer him over me?" He jealously remarked.

Lin Feiran replied casually, "Well, he is your younger brother, right? And dogs are a man's best friend."

Gu Kaifeng flashed a roguish grin. "Then I am man's best boyfriend."

"Enough of your jokes," Lin Feiran blinked sleepily at Gu Kaifeng before standing up. "I'm tired. Gonna shower and hit the hay."

Gu Kaifeng led Lin Feiran to his bedroom and handed him a fresh set of pyjamas and underwear. "These are your size."

"Who picked these out?" Lin Feiran asked while accepting them.

"I asked Ms Zhang to buy them," Gu Kaifeng answered, pointing to himself.

A wave of gratitude washed over Lin Feiran. "Thanks," he said softly, fiddling with the pyjama buttons.

"There's no need for thanks," Gu Kaifeng replied. He turned Lin Feiran around and ushered him to the bathroom, giving him a playful pat on the butt, like the one he gave at the arts festival. "Go take your shower. You'll be staying in the south-facing

guest room tonight. You'll be okay up there, right?"

Lin Feiran, caught off guard by the pat, stepped away quickly and instinctively covered his behind. "Of course I will be."

*I got Xiaxia by my side!* He felt reassured and ready to take on the night fearlessly!

Lin Feiran finished his shower in five minutes and was greeted by Xiaxia waiting just outside the bathroom. The dog's loyalty had been utterly won over by the shiny rhinestone bow tie, putting Lin Feiran on equal footing with Gu Kaifeng's parents in his heart. Gu Kaifeng, with his less frequent visits and lack of small gifts, had slightly slipped in Xiaxia's affection rankings.

After some affectionate petting, Lin Feiran dried his hair and relocated all of Xiaxia's necessities—bed, toys, food, and water bowls—to the guest room. Settling into bed, he snuggled up with Xiaxia, his new "brother-in-law" under the covers.

It seems like something has definitely changed in his core values here.

Gu Kaifeng found himself restless without his little sticky rice cake's presence. Having gotten used to their close companionship at night for half a month, his bed felt unusually empty. After tossing and turning for half an hour, the idea of a clandestine visit to Lin Feiran's room sparked a thrill in him. He got up and tiptoed through the silent house.

As Gu Kaifeng went to gently push open the guest room door, his eyes shimmering with anticipation... he found it securely locked. Undeterred, he quietly knocked twice, whispering softly and sweetly, "Feiran, let me in."

Inside, Lin Feiran was in a deep slumber, cocooned in the

warmth of Xiaxia's company, oblivious to the world outside.

Outside the door, Gu Kaifeng hesitated, wary of raising his voice and potentially disturbing his parents upstairs. After a moment of indecisiveness, he reluctantly retreated to the solitude of his own room.

The ancestral ghosts of the Gu family watched from the shadows, their whispers filled with concern. "Our dear ninth-generation sole heir seems to be treading a delicate path!" they murmured, their spectral hearts heavy with worry.

# Chapter 08

Xiaxia's gentle licks roused Lin Feiran from sleep. He glanced at his phone and noticed it was only 6:30 a.m., still early enough for more sleep. But the thought of today's agenda quickly chased away his drowsiness. He slipped out of bed and left his room. Everyone was still asleep, and Ms Zhang had yet to arrive. Lin Feiran tiptoed to the bathroom to freshen up, then took Xiaxia to the study to get a head start on his homework. He was downstairs with Gu Kaifeng by 8:30 a.m., ready for breakfast.

After they ate, Lin Feiran led Gu Kaifeng back to his bedroom and closed the door. He glanced around secretively before asking, "So... what are your parents' plans for today?"

"They need to head to the office this morning," Gu Kaifeng replied, looking down at Lin Feiran. He noticed that Lin Feiran's lashes looked exceptionally long under his lowered eyelids. "My mom will be back at noon to take us out for lunch and shopping. She suggested that we finish our homework in the

morning." After a brief pause, he added with a hint of playfulness, "It's not often I bring a friend home, so my mom really wants to treat you well."

Flattered, Lin Feiran responded with a modest wave of his hand, "Oh, that's so kind of Auntie, but no need. I have plans later and might not be back by noon."

A small smile appeared on Gu Kaifeng's lips. "What's the plan? Maybe I can join you. We can always come back later; my mom won't have any other plans in the afternoon."

Lin Feiran looked up, smiling warmly at Gu Kaifeng. "No, it's okay," he insisted, his eyes sparkling playfully like an adorable hamster. In a soft voice, he added, "Hey, the most handsome, charismatic, and captivating school hunk, can I ask you for a favour?"

Under Lin Feiran's enchanting gaze, Gu Kaifeng felt his heart flutter and miss a beat. He quickly agreed without even thinking. "Absolutely. What do you need?"

"I was hoping to borrow Xiaxia for the day. I want to take him out for a walk," Lin Feiran said, his eyes lighting up with relief.

"Is that all?" Gu Kaifeng raised an eyebrow, slightly puzzled.

Lin Feiran nodded. "Yeah, I'll bring Xiaxia back in one piece before school tonight with not a hair out of place. Don't worry."

Gu Kaifeng's expression clouded slightly. "So it's just about taking Xiaxia out? Why can't I come along?"

Lin Feiran calmly waved away Gu Kaifeng's questions. "Come on. You still have a lot of homework to do. I've been up since 6:30 a.m. finishing mine. Not to mention, your mom hasn't seen you for two weeks. It wouldn't be right for me to take you away

on the one Sunday you're home. Spend the afternoon with your mom. Don't worry about me."

Gu Kaifeng considered this and came to the realization that Lin Feiran had a point. His mother was often busy, and having some time with her was rare. He didn't want to give her the wrong impression about Lin Feiran. Biting his lip with a touch of reluctance, he leaned on the door behind Lin Feiran and asked seriously, "You're not going on a date, are you?"

"What? With whom?" Lin Feiran's eyes widened in exaggerated horror. "I'm practically glued to you. If I had a date, you'd be the first to know!"

Gu Kaifeng paused, then smiled. "Alright, then."

"Wait a second," Lin Feiran, who had instinctively reacted to Gu Kaifeng's suspicion, suddenly looked puzzled. He mumbled to himself with an adorable look, "Why did I even bother explaining so earnestly..."

"Yeah, why?" Gu Kaifeng echoed softly, stepping closer until his leg gently pressed against Lin Feiran's. With one hand on the door and the other gently lifting Lin Feiran's chin, he was inches away from starting his love confession. However, a knock at the door interrupted him, followed by his mother's voice. "Kaifeng, Feiran, we're off to the office. Make sure to get your homework done this morning, okay?"

Caught by surprise, Gu Kaifeng straightened up and ground his teeth before replying, "Okay, Mom."

Lin Feiran, meanwhile, pushed past Gu Kaifeng and opened the door with a warm smile. "Goodbye, Auntie."

Mrs Gu nodded with a friendly smile before leaving.

Lin Feiran's heart was still pounding, his mind in turmoil,

his cheeks a rosy tint. He found Gu Kaifeng's earlier behaviour puzzling, but he didn't dare dwell on it. Bending down, he scooped up Xiaxia, who had been waiting patiently at his feet. After some patting, he asked Gu Kaifeng without looking up, "Where's the leash? I need to make sure he doesn't run off."

With a hint of reluctance, Gu Kaifeng handed over the leash and hooked it to Xiaxia's collar.

Lin Feiran quickly changed his clothes and grabbed his phone and wallet. He wrapped the leash tightly around his wrist, cradling Xiaxia, planted a quick kiss on the dog's head and announced cheerfully, "Today, you're hanging out with your big brother Ran."

In response, Xiaxia barked happily, "Woof!"

"See you in the afternoon." Lin Feiran waved to Gu Kaifeng before leaving, his expression serious. "Stay in and focus on your homework. If you need help, you can check mine... just skip the Language Arts workbook."

He felt a twinge of embarrassment thinking about his answers to the classical poetry analysis.

Gu Kaifeng, leaning against the wall near the entrance with crossed arms, gave a soft smile. "Okay. See you later."

Cradling Xiaxia in his arms, Lin Feiran left the villa and flagged down a taxi at the nearest intersection. About two hours later, he arrived at his ancestral house in the countryside.

The landscape was the same as ever since his last visit. Rolling green mountains and tranquil rivers stretched into the horizon. Sparrows darted down from the peach tree near the entrance and perched on the rustic tiled roof. A faint scent of incense

hung in the air, dispersed by a gentle breeze from the lake. Pushing open the familiar courtyard gate, Lin Feiran was greeted by Dahuang's vigilant bark echoing from inside.

"Dahuang?" Lin Feiran's eyes widened in surprise. He hadn't expected to find the dog here since his assumption was that other relatives had already taken him. Recognizing Lin Feiran, Dahuang's tail wagged ecstatically. The dog bounded over, panting with his tongue out, and affectionately nuzzled Lin Feiran's leg. Startled by the larger dog, Xiaxia let out a small whimper and tried to clamber onto Lin Feiran's shoulder. Lin Feiran soothed Xiaxia with one hand and stroked Dahuang's head with the other, his eyes scanning the courtyard.

In Dahuang's bowl, a steamed bun and a half-gnawed bone were proof someone had been looking after him. This brought a sense of relief to Lin Feiran. He gave the big dog a firm hug before opening the house door, inhaling the cool air that greeted him, and stepped inside.

*Gramps must still be around.*

Lin Feiran closed the door behind him, leaving Dahuang outside. Still holding the disconcerted Xiaxia, he made his way upstairs to his late grandpa's room. Once inside, he set Xiaxia on the floor and secured the leash to a bedpost, stepping back to ensure Xiaxia couldn't reach him. Then he turned his gaze towards the bed where his grandpa had passed away, calmly waiting.

Despite his intense fear of ghosts, which had often led to unexpected shivers, Lin Feiran was confident he wouldn't be scared of his grandparents. No matter what form they took, he believed he would be alright.

As the minutes slipped by, roughly five had passed when Lin Feiran suddenly experienced that all-too-familiar, bone-chilling sensation. It was like he had been suddenly doused in ice-cold water. *Here it is.* Taking a deep breath to steel himself, he looked up.

At that moment, two ghostly figures appeared on the bed by the window. Seated side by side, their slightly hunched forms radiated an otherworldly aura, almost blending with the bright light streaming in through the window.

A lump formed in Lin Feiran's throat, his eyes brimming with tears as a wave of emotions crashed over him. In a shaky voice, he called out, "Gramps! Gram!"

The two spectral figures, bathed in the light, looked pale and lifeless like any other ghost, yet their faces wore gentle smiles. Grandpa nodded at Lin Feiran and stood up, hands clasped behind him. "Ranran's come to see us," he said, moving and speaking with the same familiar warmth he did in life as if this was just a normal visit.

Tears welled up in Lin Feiran's eyes as he moved closer. "Gramps, I've missed you so much..." His voice faltered as he reached out to gently touch his grandpa's arm, intending to embrace him. But Grandpa stepped back, waving his hand. "Don't let the yin energy chill you," he cautioned.

Lin Feiran then turned to his grandma, who stood beside Grandpa. He had lost her when he was much younger, leaving him with only faint memories. Seeing her now brought a rush of nostalgia and sadness. With tears in his eyes, he softly called, "Gram."

She smiled warmly, nodding. "Ah, our dear child."

Lin Feiran turned to his grandpa, biting his lip and sniffing back tears. The fear and frustration he had suppressed over the past days suddenly burst forth. Tears streamed down his cheeks, and he looked up with a slight frown, his voice trembling, "Gramps, these past two weeks have been a nightmare. What's happening to me?"

Grandpa sighed deeply, "Ranran, I know your fear, but it's something I can't control."

Lin Feiran grabbed a tissue, wiping his nose as he shared his woes in broken sentences. "My dorm is swarming with ghosts. I'm on the edge, barely holding it together..." He sobbed. "Thankfully, there's this one classmate ... the ghosts disappear when I touch him... I've been sticking to him like glue, scared to be alone for even a second... I even borrowed his dog today..."

Grandpa glanced at Xiaxia. "This dog seems to have very strong yang energy."

"Woof?" Xiaxia tilted his head, puzzled, as Lin Feiran seemed to talk to thin air.

"Then I made the right guess that it's yang energy." Lin Feiran wiped away his tears. "My classmate also has strong yang energy. What is that thing in me, Gramps?"

Grandpa settled back onto the bed and began, "About the nature of this and how you got it... I wish I could give you a clear answer."

Despair washed over Lin Feiran.

"Our Lin family has harboured this ability for generations," Grandpa explained. "It was passed to me following my father's death. It's hard to articulate. You may already know that there's a limit to how much the living can comprehend or express about

it. It seems to select its bearer on its own. My father had five children, three sons and two daughters. I was the fourth, yet it chose me. Perhaps it was because I had no negative feelings towards it. Similarly, it skipped your father and found its way to you."

Lin Feiran nodded silently, the sound of his sniffles filling the room.

He couldn't even begin to imagine what it would have been like if his father had inherited the Yin-yang Eye... he might have sent himself to the psychiatric ward.

Grandpa's tone was thoughtful. "It seems we were given a yin-type constitution," he mused, referring to an ancient concept where certain people are more attuned to the spiritual realm. "Those who gained this ability would be deeply connected to the yin realm, the underworld, and can see, hear, and interact with ghosts. I was even more scared than you when your great-grandfather passed away. My mother and siblings thought I had lost my mind. But the silver lining was having your great-grandfather by my side. Even then, it took me months to adapt. Ranran, you're incredibly brave and resilient. You're handling this far better than I did."

With a quiver in his voice, Lin Feiran's upset emotions burst-ed out. "Gramps, if great-grandfather was there for you, why couldn't you be here for me?"

If he could see even a single familiar face among the ghosts, it might lessen his fear.

Grandpa sighed and gestured towards their ancestral house. "I can't leave this place. I'm bound within a two-mile radius," he explained. "There are three types of souls that can't reincarnate,

each tied to the living world based on the strength of their attachments. The first type, those with weak attachments, roam freely until they are able to let go of the living world and go into the reincarnation cycle. The second type, bound by unresolved issues, linger near specific places and are unable to stray far. They can transition to the first type if their issues are resolved. And the third, marked by violent or sudden deaths or suicide, are trapped by their strong grudges, taking on the appearance of themselves at their time of death. For example, a person who died in a car crash will always appear as injured as they were at the time of the accident. They resent their sudden death and whoever caused it. Only by letting go of this resentment can they return to a more normal appearance. Humans form deep attachments, and even the most indifferent among us cling to something and often find it hard to let go. Animals are different; they move on quickly, their attachments fading fast after death. You might have noticed there aren't many animal spirits."

Lin Feiran nodded, taking in the information. "Do you fall into the second category? What about Gram? Do you two have any unresolved issues?" he asked softly.

A mischievous smile, reminiscent of a playful child, spread across Grandpa's face. He gently tugged on Grandma's sleeve. "My reason for staying is right here," he said, his eyes sparkling with fondness.

Grandma, both flustered and charmed, pushed his hand away. "Mind your manners in front of Ranran," she admonished softly.

Lin Feiran found himself unexpectedly bombarded by their public displays of affection. While he was at his most vulnera-

ble, the attack was twice as effective!

"I didn't mean to stay away," Grandpa began, carefully considering his words. "I miss you and wish I could be with you too. But the pull of my attachment here is too strong. I can't leave, and neither can your Grandma. She chose to spend her final days in this room to stay with me. That's her attachment to this place, and my attachment is with her."

Regaining his composure, Lin Feiran wiped away his tears. "Gramps, you've been able to see Gram all along, haven't you? I remember you used to talk to yourself. Were you talking to Gram?"

With a chuckle, Grandpa nodded. "Yes, she's been by my side since she passed away. Whenever I indulged a bit in liquor or enjoyed a roast chicken, she was always there, chiding me. Now, all I get are these tasteless white buns at my grave. Who would want those?"

Lin Feiran, aware of his grandpa's penchant for savoury dishes, couldn't help but smile. "Should I bring you some liquor and roast chicken then? Can you still taste them?"

"Let's not worry about that right now," Grandpa dismissed the idea with a wave of his hand. "We should concentrate on your situation first." He stood up and pointed to the bed. "Lift the mattress and open the bed board. There's something hidden underneath for you."

*It seemed like Grandpa had left some sort of hidden treasure or legacy specifically for me. Love you, Gramps!*

Lin Feiran clumsily moved the mattress aside, revealing a loose board that swung open like a cabinet door. Inside, he found an old notebook with a striking red cover, featuring a

portrait of the founding fathers of the nation and a slogan from a bygone era. The pages, yellowed and fragile, were filled with an assortment of spells and rituals, from using a black donkey's hoof for protection to sprinkling chicken blood in the southeast corner of a room at a certain hour...

"What's all this?" Lin Feiran asked, puzzled.

"That's the compilation of knowledge passed down from your great-grandfather which I recorded," Grandpa explained, his gaze softening with nostalgia as he looked at the notebook. "It includes spells and rituals for warding off malevolent ghosts. You don't need to memorize them, and hopefully, you won't need to use them. It's not something I expect you to pass on, but think of it as a precaution."

Lin Feiran murmured in acknowledgement, his mind racing with thoughts.

Inheriting a ghost-busting manual from his late grandpa should have marked the beginning of an extraordinary journey, imbuing him with the power to banish and control spirits. However, he was still terrified of ghosts, and the mere thought of having to face malevolent ghosts was enough to paralyze him with fear. For him, managing to live a normal life amidst the ghostly encounters felt like an immense accomplishment already.

Tucking the pocket-sized book into his pocket, Lin Feiran asked, "Gramps, is this a secret meant only for me? Whenever I try to speak or write it down, the words just... they won't come out..."

"It's a curse and a gift that can't be shared," Grandpa sighed, shaking his head. "I wish I could have told your father. That

poor boy."

Lin Feiran looked down, a wave of disappointment washing over him. After a moment, he said, "Actually, I haven't run into many ghosts since my first encounter. The classmate I mentioned has a really strong yang energy. I have five minutes of anti-ghost time after I touch him. His dog seems to have the same effect, so I've been sticking to them a lot... I even crashed at his place last night. Is there any way to not lean on them so much? I hate feeling like a burden..."

As Lin Feiran's thoughts drifted to Gu Kaifeng's recent behaviour, his heart almost skipped a beat. He quickly shook his head as if to dismiss those embarrassing thoughts.

"Yang energy can temporarily counterbalance your yin constitution," Grandpa said thoughtfully, stroking his beard. "If this classmate's yang energy is as potent as you say, then even his belongings might carry remnants of it. It's not much, but it could give you a brief break from your yin energy."

*His belongings could work too!* He pondered the idea of discreetly borrowing a few of Gu Kaifeng's belongings and returning them once their yang energy had faded. *A much better option than sticking to him constantly!* This revelation sparked hope in Lin Feiran's eyes, opening up new possibilities for independence.

"However," With a concerned cough, Grandpa cautioned, "I wouldn't recommend relying on that. You should learn to stand on your own. You can't depend on this classmate forever." He paused, seeking confirmation, "This classmate...he's a boy, right?"

Lin Feiran's cheeks tinged pink at the insinuation. "Yeah, he is."

Grandpa nodded sagely. "Exactly, you can't base your life around him."

"Animals with strong yang energy could also help, right?" Lin Feiran persisted, casting a glance at the ever-confused Xiaxia. "Maybe I could get a pet..."

Grandpa raised an eyebrow. "Do you really see yourself taking a pet everywhere? To school? Work?"

The flicker of hope in Lin Feiran's heart died. "I guess not," he admitted, the reality of his situation setting in. With college and a career on the horizon, it was unrealistic to expect a ghost-free life.

"It's normal to be scared now, and it's good to have someone with strong yang energy around at first," Grandpa said more gently. "But don't rely on it too much. Eventually, you'll need to face these challenges on your own."

Lin Feiran nodded, his voice carrying resigned acceptance. "I understand, Gramps."

They then spent hours delving into Grandpa's tales of his own encounters with the supernatural. Lin Feiran listened with fascination as he learned of the legacy his grandpa had achieved with his yin constitution. He gained insight into why Grandpa had hoped to pass his "mantle" on to his father, Lin Chengyu.

As their conversation drew to a close, Grandpa mused, "There's got to be a reason for people like us to exist. It may feel like a burden now, but in time, you'll see the value in it." He lifted his hand, letting it hover just above Lin Feiran's head in a silent offer of comfort. "Do good for the sake of good, and let the future unfold as it will."

"I will," Lin Feiran promised, though his face still showed

traces of youthful uncertainty.

Before leaving, Lin Feiran and Xiaxia stopped by the local deli, where Lin Fieran picked up all the delicacies his grandpa had once loved but couldn't indulge in due to health restrictions—roast chicken, pig's head, duck neck, and a bottle of liquor. At his grandpa's grave, Lin Feiran began a ritual to make an offering to a ghost, a spell taught by his grandpa earlier. He carefully set out the feast on the burial mound and lit two sticks of incense. All the while, he pictured his grandpa's face in his mind and bowed in respect.

"Gramps, I hope you enjoy," Lin Feiran whispered to the breeze while holding Xiaxia, who was eyeing the meat hungrily. "I'll come back often and bring you your favourites."

After the offering, Lin Feiran stood up, took a piece of chicken breast he had set aside for Xiaxia and gently tore it into strips before feeding it to him. As he walked back to the ancestral house, he prepared a similar feast for Dahuang. Grandpa had explained that Dahuang possessed a sharp spiritual sense and could sense their presence, especially at midnight when yin energy was at its peak. That's why Dahuang refused to leave with any of the other relatives. In the end, the family decided to let him stay at the ancestral home. A distant uncle assumed the role of Dahuang's caretaker and visited daily to provide food for the dog.

That evening, after returning Xiaxia to Gu Kaifeng's house, Mrs Gu drove them back to school, her car's trunk a treasure trove of imported snacks and fruits. "I got you boys a little something for school," she beamed, pointing to the bags when

they reached the dormitory building.

"I've got this," declared Gu Kaifeng, rolling up his sleeves, ready to single-handedly carry the bulk of the snacks upstairs. Lin Feiran quickly grabbed two bags from him and tried to take another, but Gu Kaifeng scooped up the remaining bags and dashed upstairs. After bidding Mrs Gu a warm goodbye, Lin Feiran hurried to catch up.

After unpacking, Gu Kaifeng grabbed a large fruit bowl and headed to the wash station to clean the fruit. Lin Feiran followed, meticulously washing the blueberries under running water, gently rubbing each one clean before putting it with the others in the bowl. Gu Kaifeng mirrored his actions to clean the other fruits. Their simple act turned intimate with Gu Kaifeng's occasional, fleeting touches and playful glances as they placed the fruits in the bowl together. Without Xiaxia by his side, Lin Feiran turned into a timid bundle of nerves yet again. Lin Feiran did feel Gu Kaifeng's behaviour to be somewhat unusual yet endearing but didn't dare to question it, letting the playful advances pass without challenge.

Gu Kaifeng was amused by Lin Feiran's quiet yet expressive reactions. Grinning, he asked, "So, what adventures did you and Xiaxia get up to today?"

Lin Feiran responded in a hushed whisper, "Some divine secrets are better left unspoken."

Gu Kaifeng chuckled, his fondness growing. He then playfully pinched Lin Feiran's cheek with his wet fingers. "You little goose."

Lin Feiran was stunned. *I wish I could explain! Do you think I'm doing this just to be cute?*

After eating some fruits in the dorm, Lin Feiran climbed up to the upper bunk, phone in hand, a storm of thoughts swirling in his head. His grandpa's words echoed in his mind. He knew he had to start facing his fear of ghosts and that staying glued to Gu Kaifeng was never a long-term solution, but he had been too scared to face this reality. He had hoped that meeting his grandpa would provide a way to stop seeing ghosts. But now...

Glancing at his phone, Lin Feiran decided to start with a five-minute ghost-facing training session. He buried deeper into his blanket fortress, so much so that only his face and fingers peeked out. In a feeble attempt at distraction, he fiddled nervously with his phone.

Minutes ticked by, and a familiar icy chill began to spread. Lin Feiran, biting his lip, cautiously glanced downward. The sun had just dipped below the horizon, and the dorm's spectral residents slumbered on, strewn across desks and floors in tranquil rest. The air was filled with an eerie yet peaceful chorus of breathing, snoring, and the soft murmurs of dreams. Even in sleep, the ghosts bore an unsettling presence, yet there was a certain gentleness to their quietude that dulled the edge of the horror. After enduring this for thirty seconds, Lin Feiran's complexion turned ashen. Battling the drum of fear in his chest and the pallor of his skin, he forced himself to keep watching, taking deep, uneven breaths to quell the panic rising like a tide. He reminded himself of their harmless nature, trying to grow accustomed to their presence. Holding his phone tightly, his eyes glued to the screen, he counted the seconds left of his five minutes until he could go to the bed below and seek out Gu Kaifeng's yang energy again.

However, his test of courage was cut short by Gu Kaifeng's voice from below. "Have you checked the school forum?"

Lin Feiran managed to steady his voice before responding, "Nope, what's up?" The last thing he wanted to do was reveal his fear.

Gu Kaifeng didn't continue the conversation but climbed up to the upper bunk. He glanced at Lin Feiran, who was snugly wrapped in his blanket cocoon. Handing over his phone, Gu Kaifeng urged, "Check this out."

Lin Feiran's Yin-yang Eye vanished instantly as Gu Kaifeng leaned in with a touch. A sigh of relief escaped him. He turned his attention to the phone screen, where a school forum post titled "818[8]—The Unbelievably Cute Grade 11 Couple That'll Make You Swoon" awaited, brimming with classmates' speculative chatter about him and Gu Kaifeng.

Lin Feiran's eyes went wide. "Uh..."

Gu Kaifeng hastily flicked his thumb across the screen and swiped to an image. It was a candid shot from the recent arts festival, capturing a moment backstage after Lin Feiran's piano performance. In it, Gu Kaifeng was spinning Lin Feiran in his arms, his face caught with a smile as he faced the camera. His warm, dark eyes, gently curved and filled with soft light, gazed down at Lin Feiran. Cradled in a tender embrace, his expression

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8 818: "818" is a homophone for the phrase "dig into" in Chinese. It originates from entertainment news where gossip about celebrities is unearthed, revealing their previously unknown secrets to the public. It signifies gossip, with the initial intention being to delve into (dig up or search for) someone's juicy titbits.

was a picture of adoration and affection, each feature softened with a silent vow of care. In that brief moment of twirling, Lin Feiran hadn't noticed Gu Kaifeng's affectionate gaze. But now, confronted with the image and those deep, expressive eyes. His cheeks blazed a deep red, erasing any trace of the ghostly pallor from before.

With his eyes lowered and searching for the right words, Lin Feiran's voice was as soft as a whisper. "What's the deal with this post? Why are we being labelled as a couple?"

"Since you transferred, people haven't stopped posting," Gu Kaifeng replied with a playful smirk. "They tease, saying I'm the top, and you're the bottom."

"I am not the bottom," Lin Feiran shot back, a mix of embarrassment and defiance colouring his tone. "I'm straight, completely straight."

Gu Kaifeng burst into laughter. "You? Straight?"

Lin Feiran's cheeks burning. "Are you really just bluntly dismissing someone's sexuality like that?"

"Stop playing. You're driving me insane," Gu Kaifeng murmured, his gaze drifting over Lin Feiran's flushed face. Changing the topic, he asked, "Why are you bundled up in your blanket? Feeling cold?"

*What am I playing at? Who's driving who insane?* Lin Feiran felt uneasy and seized the opportunity to steer the conversation. "Yeah, it's been pretty chilly lately. The temperature's been fluctuating... Wh-What are you doing?"

"Just warming you up," Gu Kaifeng teased, easing the blanket away to corner Lin Feiran against the wall. He leaned in, pressing himself on top of Lin Feiran, his finger lightly brushing

against Lin Feiran's red earlobe as he softly chuckled, "Feeling warmer now?"

Caught in Gu Kaifeng's sudden embrace, a rush of panic flooded Lin Feiran. His eyes widened in surprise. Despite feeling like he was out of his depth, he tried to answer in the most platonic way possible and stammered, "Yeah, I'm...warm now, but it's...a little hard to breathe..."

"Lin Feiran," Gu Kaifeng called, locking eyes with him, fingers gently caressing Lin Feiran's chin. "Would it be okay if I called you 'Ranran' from now on?"

Lin Feiran swallowed hard, his face blushing so fiercely it could outshine a ripe tomato in embarrassment. "Only my family calls me that."

"Aren't boyfriends sort of like family?" Gu Kaifeng's voice sounded heavy with implications. Under Lin Feiran's wide, flustered doe eyes, he leaned in closer and asked the question that had been weighing on his heart for days, "Tell me honestly... don't you like me?"

Lin Feiran felt as if he'd been knocked off his feet. "What?!"

Gu Kaifeng brushed off Lin Feiran's stunned reaction with a soft laugh, his tone sincere as he confessed, "I like you. Let's be together."

His voice, warm and magnetic, delivered each word with such clarity that every single word hit Lin Feiran like a barrage of fireworks, leaving him completely floored.

*Bang!*

"Hold on..." The wildest theory Lin Feiran had hardly dared to consider suddenly became a shocking reality. Just as he was about to reject the idea, Gu Kaifeng cradled his face in his

hands, tilted his head and planted a passionate kiss on his lips. Lin Feiran's initial attempt to protest was silenced while his mouth gaped in surprise, an opportunity Gu Kaifeng quickly seized. His soft, warm tongue shyly ventured into Lin Feiran's mouth, hesitating and pulling back as soon as it touched his. This moment of timidity was fleeting as it was quickly overcome by a surge of deeper, fiercer feelings. Engulfed by the rush of their mingling lips and tongues, Gu Kaifeng's head spun, and warmth poured over him. For a moment, the world around them dissolved into nothing but just him and Lin Feiran. They were lost in the galaxy at this moment. Lin Feiran's resistance was as fleeting as the flutter of a butterfly, delicate and brief before fading away.

"Ah..." Lin Feiran blinked in astonishment, his shock was as profound as when he'd first seen a ghost. He was stunned speechless. He tried to free his arms, only to find them held securely in the embrace. In an attempt to push against Gu Kaifeng's kiss, he inadvertently deepened it. Even Lin Feiran couldn't discern if he was resisting or reciprocating. Pinned beneath Gu Kaifeng, his body felt unbearably warm and weightless as if he might float away the moment Gu Kaifeng released him.

Gu Kaifeng, seemingly amused by Lin Feiran's dazed, wide-eyed reaction, smiled and tenderly covered Lin Feiran's eyes with his hand, deepening their kiss. It wasn't until their breathing became laboured that he finally broke away from the embrace. For Gu Kaifeng, their first kiss was unforgettable, a moment suspended in time.

"Ranran?" Gu Kaifeng coaxed, waving a hand before Lin Fei-

ran's eyes to snap him back to reality.

The beginning of tears shimmered in Lin Feiran's eyes, and he bit down on his lips, now tender and slightly puffy from being kissed. He lingered in stunned silence for a moment before he could muster the courage to stammer out the words interrupted by the kiss, "I... I don't feel the same... Wh-What are you doing?"

"You don't?!" It was Gu Kaifeng's turn to be taken aback. "Come again?"

"Gu Kaifeng, are you..." Lin Feiran hesitated, his voice tinged with nervousness, "gay?"

Gu Kaifeng's mind blanked. Their eyes locked in shared bewilderment.

After a moment, Gu Kaifeng regained his composure and raised an eyebrow. "I am. Aren't you?"

Lin Feiran shook his head vigorously, his heart still racing.

Silence fell over them again. The atmosphere turned incredibly awkward, and what should have been a memorable first kiss into an awkward misfire.

Taking a deep breath and clenching his teeth, Gu Kaifeng pressed for an answer. "Then why have you been flirting with me every day?"

"I..." Lin Feiran opened his mouth to respond, but his words about the Yin-yang Eye and yang energy were caught in his throat, unspoken.

Seeing Lin Feiran's silence, Gu Kaifeng's expression darkened. "Did you think it was fun to lead me on?"

"No!" Lin Feiran quickly and loudly denied, "Absolutely not!"

Gu Kaifeng observed Lin Feiran's frantic efforts to explain and relaxed slightly, realizing this wasn't an act. Lin Feiran was so naive and endearing that he didn't seem capable of toying with someone. With a mixture of fondness and frustration, Gu Kaifeng softened his approach, playfully stroking Lin Feiran's chin. "Then why back off after all this time, you little heartbreaker?"

Feeling guilt, Lin Feiran confessed in a quieter voice, "I didn't mean to lead you on. I had no idea you were gay. Isn't it normal for two straight guys to be close like us...?" His voice faded into a whisper as he began to question his own actions. The more he thought about it, the more his guilt grew, and his words became more contemplative.

Gu Kaifeng was visibly frustrated after hearing this. "Huh? Normal for two straight guys? Really? Try saying that again!"

Lin Feiran, steeling himself and deciding to stand his ground, began, "Two straight guys..." He paused. *This really is closer than what two straight guys would do! Shit!* Realization hit him like a cold shower.

"Go on, say it again. I might just kiss you senseless." Gu Kaifeng said tensely.

Lin Feiran immediately went silent.

Gu Kaifeng zeroed in with a pointed question, "If it's so normal, why don't you act this way with other guys?"

Lin Feiran had no comeback, so he just lowered his head in silence. He looked defeated, like a little sticky rice cake that had deflated.

Gu Kaifeng's irritation softened as he looked at Lin Feiran. "Did I push too hard earlier? Did I scare you?"

Lin Feiran thought it over before shaking his head. He was shocked by the fierce kiss, but it wasn't fear that was holding him back.

Gu Kaifeng tried another approach, "Is it because you were straight and never thought about a guy in this way, and now you're confused?"

Lin Feiran, on the verge of tears, quickly said, "I don't see you like that..."

"Okay, okay, don't cry," Gu Kaifeng coaxed, unable to bear the sight of Lin Feiran's teary eyes, which only made it worse by stirring the deep desire within him. He gently wiped away Lin Feiran's tears with his thumb, offering comfort. Then, he voiced the last possibility he could think of for why Lin Feiran might have rejected him. "Maybe you just need some time? Would you like me to court you? It would be a new experience for me, but I'm willing if you are..."

Lin Feiran dismissed it again. "That's not it..."

"Then why have you given me mixed signals these past weeks?" Gu Kaifeng spoke through clenched teeth. "You have one minute to explain. If you don't, I'll take it as it is."

After a moment of thought, Lin Feiran's mind went blank. Feeling cornered, he visibly deflated, curling into himself before offering a meek apology with a soft plea. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize you'd see it that way. It's my fault. Maybe I should just keep my distance..."

Seeing Lin Feiran as helpless as a baby rabbit, Gu Kaifeng almost laughed but kept a serious face as he glanced at his watch. "You have ten seconds left. Ten, nine, eight..."

Lin Feiran tugged at Gu Kaifeng's arm and carefully chose his

words. "I've been sticking close to you because I've been having nightmares. I'm really scared. The school, the dorms, they feel haunted..." his voice cautious.

Gu Kaifeng scoffed in clear disbelief. "Do you think I'm stupid?"

Lin Feiran felt like banging his head against a well; he was at a loss for a more convincing explanation.

*Hey! I am telling you the truth, dammit!*

"Time's up," Gu Kaifeng announced coldly, "What's your real reason?"

Lin Feiran slumped into a corner like a deflated little sticky rice cake, his expression blank and forlorn.

Gu Kaifeng drawled, "So, I'm to assume that you..."

Out of desperation, Lin Feiran decided to sacrifice his pride and reputation and blurted out, "I got it! I'm just slow and stupid, okay?!"

Gu Kaifeng, unfazed by the feeble and silly excuse, spoke each word with deliberate precision. "Your actions say otherwise. Playing hard to get, huh?"

Lin Feiran fell silent for a moment, then clenched his teeth and resignedly admitted, "Fine! I was just messing with you, so punch me if it makes you feel better!"

"Oh?" Gu Kaifeng's gaze intensified.

The blush from their first kiss still lingered on Lin Feiran's cheeks. His lashes were damp, expression filled with feigned bravery that scarcely veiled his inner turmoil. His chest heaved with emotion, and his lips trembled as if itching to argue against the injustice. Gu Kaifeng saw through everything. Lin Feiran held Gu Kaifeng's gaze briefly before clenching his teeth and

shutting his eyes, bracing himself for a punch. He even tilted his face towards Gu Kaifeng, expecting the worst.

Gu Kaifeng had harboured suspicions that Lin Feiran was "messing around," yet the sincerity of Lin Feiran's reaction dispelled these doubts, softening his demeanour. "I don't want to hurt you," he admitted, acknowledging the excuse. He decided to play along anyway. "But I do want to fuck you. Y'know, to vent some frustration."

Lin Feiran's body jolted in surprise, his eyes snapping open.

Gu Kaifeng's smile turned sly, "Lin Feiran, you've stirred up quite a storm. Let's be honest, were you just being friendly? You owe me some explanation, don't you think? It's not fair to give me hope and then pull back. What kind of guy does that? You have to take responsibility."

Lin Feiran was left speechless, never having imagined he'd be called to take responsibility for a man ten centimetres taller than him.

Seated face to face on Lin Feiran's bed, their proximity was electric. Gu Kaifeng's anticipation vibrated through the air, hinting at another daring kiss at any time. Overwhelmed, Lin Feiran covered his mouth and averted his gaze. "Could you go down first? I need a moment."

"Of course." Gu Kaifeng slid down from the top bunk effortlessly, his face radiant, as if on cloud nine, with a smile dancing on his lips. He did not show any signs of someone who had just been rejected after confessing his feelings.

Surprisingly, Gu Kaifeng felt a sweet exhilaration bubble up inside him and even had an unexpected stir of excitement.

Lin Feiran had meant to dash to the wash station to cool off

and dodge further encounters. However, Gu Kaifeng seemed to anticipate this move. Settling in the swivel chair by the door with a book, he was acting as a "Door Deity"[9] to prevent escape. Lin Feiran, too shy to ask Gu Kaifeng to move, retreated under his blanket like a turtle retreating into its shell, his hand pressed against his chest to calm his racing heart.

Lin Feiran was confused. The unexpected kiss from a guy should have plunged him into turmoil filled with awkwardness, anger, or disgust. Instead, he felt none of these. His mind was a blank slate, save for the relentless thumping of his heart. *Thump, thump, thump.* He laid face down, wrapped from head to toe in his blanket, his gaze fixed blankly on the bed rail. Tentatively, he touched his lips, the very ones that Gu Kaifeng had kissed, and his fingers recoiled as though they'd brushed against something scorching hot. It was as if his fingertips continued to burn even after letting go.

*Why aren't I angry? What's wrong with me?!* Lin Feiran wondered, recalling the kiss. He failed to summon any negative, "normal" emotions. Instead, a feverish flush spread across his cheeks, and his heart raced even faster.

*Ahhhhhh!* Frustrated, he punched his bed in exasperation.

At the sound, Gu Kaifeng glanced up in amusement. Lin Feiran's outburst seemed as harmless as a kitten playfully swiping at a toy. "What's wrong?" he asked.

Hearing Gu Kaifeng's voice made Lin Feiran retreat further under his blanket. He curled up again, his voice muffled by the

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9 Door Deity: the protective deities in Chinese folklore believed to guard the entrance to a home or temple against evil spirits and bad luck.

blanket, "Nothing, Just... needed to vent."

Gu Kaifeng let out a snicker before turning his attention back to his book. He appeared engrossed, his eyes methodically moving over the pages, seemingly unaffected by the recent turn of events. However, it took him five minutes to realize that he had been staring blankly at a physics workbook.

In the meanwhile, Lin Feiran noticed something unusual: his yin energy hadn't resurfaced yet. Over ten minutes had passed since his last contact with Gu Kaifeng, yet the dorm room remained peaceful, and he still felt warm with yang energy. Even his normally cold hands and feet were toasty. Baffled, he took a screenshot of the time on his phone and began aimlessly scrolling through various apps and websites. He briefly considered searching "How to determine one's sexual orientation" but eventually deleted the text.

He sighed and tossed his phone aside, eyes finding themselves on the ceiling. More than twenty minutes had passed, and still no sign of ghosts.

Sitting cross-legged on his bed, he bit his lip, lost in thought. *Could Gu Kaifeng's brief presence have imbued the bed with yang energy? Was its effect so potent? Or could it be...?* The flashback of their kiss made him flush, prompting him to lean forward and lightly tap his forehead against the wall.

*It couldn't be the... saliva, could it?!* Lin Feiran's face blazed even redder as the thought sent him into a frenzy of denial. *Ahhhhhhhhh! Nooooooo! Please!*

Thus, there was Gu Kaifeng seated by the door, pretending to read with a watchful eye only, while Lin Feiran was on the bed, blushing furiously, tormented by his wandering thoughts.

It seemed that Lin-little sticky rice cake-Feiran, had hit a new low in the tangled game of love!

After a while, Lin Feiran collected himself and carefully climbed down from the upper bunk before making his way to the door. "Excuse me, I need to step out," he mumbled, shuffling in his slippers.

Gu Kaifeng sprawled in the chair by the door like a school bully, his long legs stretched out carelessly in defiance. He looked up, arms crossed. "Heading out? What for?"

"Just to the toilet," Lin Feiran muttered.

Gu Kaifeng tapped on the door frame and pointed to his cheek. "This door's under my control. A kiss, and you're free to go."

Lin Feiran rolled his eyes, ignoring the bait. "What are you, five? Always claiming things as 'yours.'"

Gu Kaifeng's smile grew. "Well, it might actually be mine. My dad donated to the school that helped renovate the dormitory building. You weren't there to see it before when it was shabby."

Lin Feiran pressed his lips together, choosing silence.

"See how new these beds look?" Gu Kaifeng gestured towards their bunk bed. "Could be thanks to my dad's generosity."

"And your point is?" Lin Feiran asked, frowning.

Leaning closer, Gu Kaifeng whispered suggestively. "Well, you've been crashing in my bed for nearly two months."

*How could he be so shameless after a rejection?!* Desperate to pee, Lin Feiran bit his lip, at a loss for words with Gu Kaifeng's cheeky blockade. Moreover, feeling somewhat in the wrong himself, he found it difficult to muster genuine anger towards

Gu Kaifeng. Without a word, he turned around, retrieved an almost empty soda bottle from his bag, downed the contents, and retreated to a corner, bottle in hand.

"Hey, honey, I was just kidding." Gu Kaifeng called out, noticing Lin Feiran's discomfort. He quickly grabbed the empty bottle and tossed it in the trash. "I'm sorry, alright? Go ahead."

With a frustrated grunt, Lin Feiran headed to the toilet. He also brought a cup and basin to the wash station to brush his teeth and wash his face and feet, warily on the lookout for more of Gu Kaifeng's antics. When he returned, he bumped into Gu Kaifeng heading to the wash station himself, basin in hand. Lin Feiran averted his gaze and quickly went back to their room and closed the door.

He looked around the room for anything of Gu Kaifeng's he could borrow for the night to draw yang energy from. The realization that Gu Kaifeng was gay and interested in him made the idea of sharing a bed unthinkable. He didn't want to be a cliché—caught in a scenario where actions contradict words. The idea of pushing Gu Kaifeng away only to return to his bed felt like he was intending on spreading his legs for him.

Lin Feiran snatched a few pens and a notebook from Gu Kaifeng's desk, hiding them under his pillow on the upper bunk. His heart raced with the thrill of being a "thief" for the first time. Then, upon spotting a set of Gu Kaifeng's unwashed school uniform in the laundry bin in the corner—a pair of pants, a jacket, and a shirt—he had a lightbulb moment.

*Clothes,* he reasoned, *would surely hold more yang energy than stationary, right?*

Like a pervert who couldn't get enough, he quickly grabbed

the white shirt and, on a whim—to ensure he had enough yang energy for the night—also added the pants to his haul, planning to stealthily return them in the morning. He reassured himself that Gu Kaifeng wouldn't be doing laundry at this late hour.

Now Lin-little sneaky rice cake thief-Feiran quietly climbed back into his bunk and hid his loot under the blanket. He laid down and casually scrolled through his phone.

*If these items retain enough yang energy, I won't need to share a bed with Gu Kaifeng anymore!* He thought, pleased.

When Gu Kaifeng entered and found Lin Feiran settled in the upper bunk, surprise flickered across his face. "Skipping the bottom bunk tonight?" he asked, setting down his basin.

Lin Feiran, with the determination of a revolutionist, shook his head. "No, not tonight."

"Oh," Gu Kaifeng said, feigning indifference before he began climbing up to join Lin Feiran. "Guess I'll come up there then."

"Wait!" Lin Feiran blurted out, his face draining of colour at Gu Kaifeng's unexpected actions. He hadn't hidden the stolen clothes yet. "I didn't say you could..."

But it was too late. Gu Kaifeng was already making himself comfortable under Lin Feiran's blanket, shooting him a teasing glance. "Since when do we need permission to share? You never asked before."

In a panic, Lin Feiran discreetly pushed the clothes toward the wall, hoping to hide them.

"What's that ?" Gu Kaifeng's curiosity was piqued as he lifted the blanket, spotting the uniform. "Honey, what do we have here?" His eyebrows shot up, a playful yet predatory look in his eyes.

Lin Feiran was at a loss for words. He retreated to the corner, anxiety written all over him, toes curling in distress. "They're mine... I forgot I had them on the bed when I changed," he lied, hoping the similarity in their school uniforms would make the deception possible. Anyway, Gu Kaifeng's was just a size larger.

As Lin Feiran nervously avoided eye contact, Gu Kaifeng observed him with a knowing smirk. "Is that so?" Gu Kaifeng, attuned to Lin Feiran's tell-tale signs of lying, chose to keep this insight to himself. Like many, Lin Feiran was oblivious to his own physical giveaways.

"Yes," Lin Feiran insisted, a bit too quickly.

With a grunt, Gu Kaifeng moved to the edge, pretending to get down.

"Just stay and sleep, it's late." Lin Feiran sat up quickly and grabbed Gu Kaifeng's wrist, a clear plea for company.

"I suddenly want to check on my uniforms," Gu Kaifeng said calmly, but his eyes sparkled with amusement.

Lin Feiran's cheeks turned a deeper shade of red, his embarrassment palpable.

"Caught you." Gu Kaifeng grinned and confirmed his suspicion.

"...It's yours," Lin Feiran mumbled, mortified. He hid his face in the blanket with only his reddened ears showing.

"Why hide my uniform in your cocoon?" Gu Kaifeng leaned closer, trying to draw Lin Feiran out of his shell. Lin Feiran remained hunched over, unwilling to look up. "Come on, honey, tell me why," Gu Kaifeng urged gently.

Lin Feiran stayed silent, his mind came up with only a single logical and disgusting excuse. *I'm a pervert who sniffs worn*

*clothes*. He was hoping that if he didn't respond, Gu Kaifeng might give up and return to his own bed.

Yet, he'd grossly underestimated Gu Kaifeng's brazenness!

Gu Kaifeng continued. "Hiding my clothes and suddenly wanting to sleep alone..."

Suddenly, a sense of foreboding washed over Lin Feiran.

Gu Kaifeng teasingly squeezed Lin Feiran's waist, his voice low and mischievous, "Since you planned to have a wank, why not include me?"

Lin Feiran's cheeks burned with embarrassment, he would explode if shyness was a kind of fuel. He sat up abruptly, and shouted out, "I was not planning to do that!"

"Then what were you gonna do with the clothes?" Gu Kaifeng pried, interpreting Lin Feiran's silence as a confirmation. He gently pushed Lin Feiran back onto the bed, leaning over him. "Come on, tell me."

Worried about another overwhelming kiss, Lin Feiran quickly averted his gaze, exposing his neck and side profile. Nervously, he stammered, "I-I had no such plans. Can you get down, and we can talk about this properly?"

"Surely, that wasn't your excuse to masturbate," Gu Kaifeng mused, eyeing intensely at Lin Feiran's neck. He leaned in, lips barely grazing Lin Feiran's skin. "You were just trying to drive me crazy, weren't you?" As he whispered, his warm breath caressed Lin Feiran's neck.

Lin Feiran's mind went blank, and in a burst of defiance, he blurted out, "Yes, yes! I wanted to make you crazy, so I can claim your Language Arts homework as mine! Happy now?"

Gu Kaifeng could not contain his laughter. Lin Feiran's

outburst nearly shattered the romantic mood, just as the dorm lights conveniently turned off.

Since the night Lin Feiran had sought refuge in Gu Kaifeng's bed due to his "nightmare", a small lamp had remained lit on Gu Kaifeng's study table, a nightly ritual born from Gu Kaifeng's initial kindness. In the soft glow, Lin Feiran's wary distance felt more enticing. Gu Kaifeng, feeling a dryness in his throat, laid beside Lin Feiran, gently drawing him closer with an arm around his waist.

The moment Gu Kaifeng's arm encircled him, Lin Feiran felt something hard pressing against his butt, startling him.

"You..." Lin Feiran's embarrassment reached a new level. He wriggled, attempting to escape, but the cramped bed left no room.

Gu Kaifeng reeled him back, closing the gap between them. With a roguish grin, he suggested, "How about we lend each other a hand, honey?"

"Are you asking for a fight?!" Lin Feiran's patience snapped, his composure crumbling.

"Absolutely," Gu Kaifeng replied with ease, his hand daringly slipping under Lin Feiran's pyjamas, fingers teasingly grazing the edge of his pants. "Draw your sword."

Overwhelmed with embarrassment and irritation, Lin Feiran blurted out, "You're insane!" The Lin-Little Sticky Rice Cake Emotional Detection Station was on critical alert, broadcasting a glaring red sign: "Gu Kaifeng! I am beyond mad at you!"

With that, Lin Feiran turned to the wall, facing away from Gu Kaifeng, and wrapped himself even tighter within the blanket, intentionally leaving Gu Kaifeng in the cold.

It was Lin Feiran's silent ultimatum: No blanket for Gu Kaifeng!

*Damn, maybe I went too far.* Gu Kaifeng dialled back his burning desire, and gently pulled Lin Feiran closer, blanket and all. He whispered, "Sorry, I got carried away. Let's just sleep, okay?"

Lin Feiran was still and silent, quietly plotting a polite way to get Gu Kaifeng out of his bed.

But then, Gu Kaifeng abruptly sat up and tossed the two balled-up school uniforms from the bed onto the floor. "These are in the way." he declared, thwarting Lin Feiran's only way out.

With Gu Kaifeng's eyes on him, Lin Feiran knew retrieving the uniforms was out of the question.

"I'm cold. Let me under the blanket." Gu Kaifeng pulled at the blanket. "Please, honey."

Lin Feiran muttered to himself as he clung on even tighter. Under the blanket, he discreetly adjusted his penis to ease unexpected arousal, pressing it against his lower abdomen and pulling down his pyjamas to make sure everything was in order. He was worried that Gu Kaifeng might notice something was wrong.

*This is insane! Lin Junior, why now?!* Lin Feiran thought, a nervous sweat breaking out.

Gu Kaifeng, observing Lin Feiran's subtle movements under the blanket, guessed the cause but chose silence over addressing the awkwardness. Slipping under the blanket, he carefully wrapped an arm around Lin Feiran's waist, meeting no resistance this time. Whispering softly, he murmured into Lin Feiran's ear, "Goodnight, Ranran."

"Goodnight." Lin Feiran replied softly, his ears tinged red.

Gu Kaifeng, content with the moment, closed his eyes, savouring the closeness without pushing further.

To him, Lin Feiran was like a coveted little sticky rice cake. It was as though Gu Kaifeng had finally peeled off the wrapper of the little rice cake only to discover that it shaking from fear of being eaten. All he could do was hold the rice cake close, appreciating its delicious smell and soft texture.

Gu Kaifeng found contentment in their current dynamic. Lin Feiran was simply too irresistible, and he was happy to savour every moment of their blossoming relationship at a leisurely pace, making the anticipation all the sweeter.

The awkward night had passed, and Lin Feiran woke up to a cold, grey morning. The city had experienced a sudden temperature drop, and the warm day had been consumed by a biting northern wind. Trees outside the window swayed ominously, setting a chilling tone.

Shivering, Lin Feiran searched his wardrobe for a thick sweater and fleece-lined thermal pants—the kind fashionistas would turn their noses up at. Just as he was about to peel off his pyjamas, he caught Gu Kaifeng's gaze from the upper bunk. Gu Kaifeng, already awake, was propped on his side, eyeing Lin Feiran with an amused and somewhat suggestive look.

*What a way to start the day!*

Feeling embarrassed under Gu Kaifeng's scrutiny, Lin Feiran quickly grabbed his clothes, intending on leaving the room to change.

"Where are you going?" Gu Kaifeng called out, swiftly climb-

ing down the ladder.

With a frustrated glance, Lin Feiran shot back at this perv, "To the toilet."

"The toilet's ice-cold. Just change here," Gu Kaifeng suggested. He felt Lin Feiran's fierce glare, but it was more endearing than intimidating to him. He even found Lin Feiran's narrowed eyes more attractive than anyone else's coquettish looks. Grabbing the basin and preparing to leave the room, Gu Kaifeng couldn't help but gently pinch Lin Feiran's cheek before he went to freshen up.

Lin Feiran signed in relief. Seizing the moment, he quickly got dressed in the dorm. Then, he pulled out two pens and a notebook from under his pillow and tidied away the borrowed items, only keeping a pen for himself.

As the morning went on, Lin Feiran made a satisfying discovery: the residual yang energy from a pen Gu Kaifeng had used in one class session could suppress his Yin-yang Eye for about twenty minutes before the energy dissipated. This phenomenon wasn't limited to pens alone; notebooks, textbooks, and papers—all were fair game. Any moment Gu Kaifeng was distracted became a chance for Lin Feiran to sneakily borrow an item, harness its energy, and then return it unnoticed. He had turned into quite the unconventional thief, keeping a good record of borrowing and returning.

Thanks to these borrowed items, he minimised physical contact with Gu Kaifeng throughout the day. Despite his efforts to avoid contact, Gu Kaifeng's touches were unavoidable...

As their third class drew to a close, rain began its descent outside, marking the shift from autumn to winter with its

bone-chilling embrace. This type of rain, amplified by the biting cold, left the ground sodden, casting a gloomy mood over the rest of the day. Lin Feiran, watching raindrops trace paths down the window, found little comfort in the cold and pulled his sweater sleeves down over his chilled hands in an attempt to warm them up.

No sooner had the end-of-class bell rang that Lin Feiran felt the stirrings of his Yin-yang Eye once more.

Lin Feiran resolved to tackle his ghost-facing challenge head-on, so he devised a plan to stay focused during lessons and directly confront any ghosts during breaks. He avoided relying on Gu Kaifeng's items during the break and instead, pretended he was deeply engrossed in a book. He used one hand as a makeshift shield over his forehead while subtly surveying the room.

His attention initially wandered to the "top-student" ghost haunting Zhang Xu for weeks. Soon after, a spectral cat caught his eye in the aisle. Its fluffy white fur and vivid blue eyes were captivating despite not being a purebred. However, its allure was diminished by the muddy dirt and fresh blood stains that sullied its fur, giving it a dishevelled look.

The cat tried engaging with the students, meowing and playfully nibbling at their pant legs, but no one noticed. It seemed confused, perhaps unaware of its ethereal existence.

Encountering an animal ghost for the first time, Lin Feiran found himself surprisingly less intimidated, possibly due to the difference in species. He watched the cat with curiosity and a touch of compassion. When their eyes locked, Lin Feiran whispered quietly to the cat, "What's wrong?"

# Chapter 09

As their gazes met, the cat seemed to recognise Lin Feiran could indeed see it. Its eyes, filled with desperation, suddenly lit up with hope and quickly bounded toward him. It gently bit his trouser leg, then stepped back, looking at him with a pleading meow before repeating the action.

*Does it want me to follow?* Lin Feiran wondered. Checking his phone, he noticed there were still six minutes before the next class. Deciding to follow the cat, he stood up from his seat.

While the ghostly cat didn't frighten him much, other ghosts in the vicinity still sent a shiver down his spine, so he focused solely on the cat. The sadness in its eyes was too desperate to be ignored. Thanks to the daylight that kept most ghosts in low spirits, with many asleep on the ground, the half-headed Old principal, who had paid peculiar attention to Lin Feiran before, was also nowhere to be seen. He was probably haunting another classroom. Lin Feiran took a deep breath, trying not to let his gaze wander.

Gu Kaifeng, picking up on Lin Feiran's unusual expression, hurried after him and inquired with a mix of concern and curiosity, "Where are you headed?"

"I've got something to do. You don't have to come," Lin Feiran replied, cautiously maintaining a gap between them to prevent the unintended absorption of Gu Kaifeng's yang energy, which would cause him to lose sight of the cat.

Gu Kaifeng trailed behind in silence, hands buried in his pockets, exuding an air of nonchalance as though he were merely out for a leisurely stroll. It's not like Lin Feiran asked him to leave either, but he has to admit that having Gu Kaifeng nearby was somewhat comforting.

The cat led the way, periodically checking to make sure Lin Feiran was still following. At the entrance of the academic building, Lin Feiran hesitated, eyeing the rain uncertainly. That's when Wang Zhuo appeared, arms laden with snacks and an umbrella, looking ravenous like he couldn't wait for lunch.

"Perfect timing. I'll take your umbrella." Gu Kaifeng said as he took it.

Wang Zhuo, holding up his bag of snacks, offered, "Heading out? Grab some of mine if you're hungry."

"I'm not going to the convenience store," Gu Kaifeng replied, holding the umbrella to catch up with Lin Feiran.

Wang Zhuo couldn't help but tease them. "What's this? A romantic stroll in the rain?"

Lin Feiran threw a scathing glare at Wang Zhuo, the sidekick who was always backing up Gu Kaifeng's endless teasing. Then, he spotted a line of forlorn ghosts trailing after him, eyeing the bag of snacks with longing. Only heaven knows how long it had

been since they'd received any offerings from the living.

Lin Feiran felt torn between pity for Wang Zhuo's obliviousness and his own burden of knowledge.

"Take notes, Mr Third Wheel!" While shouting back to Wang Zhuo in the distance, Gu Kaifeng opened the umbrella for Lin Feiran. With one hand casually tucked in his pocket and the other holding the umbrella, he left his jacket open, as if trying a bit too hard to seem cool. Yet, somehow, he managed to pull it off effortlessly.

Lin Feiran glanced up at Gu Kaifeng, who returned the look with a smile that seemed to light up even more under the soft glow of the pink umbrella. It was as if he was enveloped in the delicate blooms of March's peach blossoms. Lin Feiran couldn't help but ponder why Wang Zhuo, a male, would own a pink umbrella.

"Is your hubby incredibly handsome?" Gu Kaifeng whispered.

"What nonsense are you talking about?" Lin Feiran, caught off guard by the term "hubby". He had never even considered having one! Yet his heart betrayed him and skipped a beat.

He felt like a deer in headlights!

Gu Kaifeng chuckled, "In denial? But you should've seen your sparkly eyes when you looked at me just now."

Lin Feiran's fleeting affection had been blasted into orbit by Mr School Hunk Gu's bold words. Keeping a straight face, he also shot back a nonsensical response. "My eyes just naturally sparkly."

They're just that bright and expressive!

Led by the ghostly cat, Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng found

themselves in a neglected area behind the academic building while they were talking. The base of the fence was overgrown with weeds, and the cold rain had left shallow puddles all over the ground. The cat vanished into a bush, meowing persistently. When they got closer, the sight that greeted them was heart-wrenching: a deceased cat with four tiny kittens nestled against her, seeking refuge from the rain. One particularly weak kitten desperately sought milk from its mother's belly.

"Gosh," Gu Kaifeng muttered and turned to Lin Feiran with concern. "How did you find them?"

Lin Feiran remained silent, at a loss for words.

The four defenceless kittens, huddled in the rain next to their lifeless mother, were the reason behind the mother's desperate attempts to seek help. The scars and scuffs on her body, along with a festering wound on her belly, were obvious signs of the harsh life she led, probably from fighting over scraps and territory with other strays. Gazing at her own body from the side, her piercing blue eyes were filled with confusion.

Without hesitation, Lin Feiran focused on warming the shivering kittens, pushing aside the sorrow of the mother cat's fate. He started to take off his jacket, intending to bring them back to the dorm for care. But Gu Kaifeng, with his jacket already open, was quicker. He wrapped the shivering kittens in his jacket, holding them against his chest and declared he would take them back himself. "I'll take them to the dorm; you better get to class."

"Give them to me; I'll look after them," Lin Feiran insisted. Yet, with the class bell about to ring, he faced a tough decision. The kittens needed immediate attention, and whoever took

them to the dorm would have to miss the next class.

Gu Kaifeng suggested with a cheeky grin, "The next class is Language Arts, Ms Li won't get angry with my absence. Just go to class and tell her I've got a stomach ache. Be a good boy."

With silent resignation, Lin Feiran had no choice but to agree.

While Lin Feiran excelled in most subjects, Language Arts proved to be his weak spot, often landing him in the spotlight of Ms Li's attention. On the other hand, Gu Kaifeng, boasting top-notch grades and impeccable handwriting, was Ms Li's darling student. The disparity was stark: skipping class could spell disaster for a student grappling with the subject, while someone like Gu Kaifeng could walk free with no consequences.

"Take the umbrella." Lin Feiran accepted his fate reluctantly, offering the handle to Gu Kaifeng. "Don't catch a cold."

"I'll be fine," Gu Kaifeng declined, smiling. "I can run really fast. It'll take me less than half a minute to get to the dorm."

Hearing this, Lin Feiran remembered watching Gu Kaifeng sprint during the 4x400 relay on Sports Day. An unfortunate fall left him lagging, but Gu Kaifeng's incredible speed had saved their ranking. At the time, Lin Feiran felt a sting in his pride and a hint of jealousy toward Gu Kaifeng. Now, any twinge of jealousy had given way to genuine admiration. He couldn't help but think with a sense of pride, "Gu Kaifeng is an amazing runner. There's no doubting his athleticism."

Just as Gu Kaifeng was about to leave, he paused, gave Lin Feiran a serious look, and beckoned him closer with a curled finger. "Come here."

Lin Feiran, puzzled and worried something might be wrong

with the kittens, approached without hesitation, his focus was entirely on the bundle cradled by Gu Kaifeng.

"I want a reward." Gu Kaifeng said, the mischief clear in his grin. Before Lin Feiran could react, Gu Kaifeng leaned in and left a quick kiss on his cheek.

After stealing a swift kiss on the cheek, he darted away before Lin Feiran could even process the gesture. Gu Kaifeng dashed off towards the dormitory, his tall, lean figure swallowed by the rain.

Feeling a rush of emotion, Lin Feiran instinctively touched his cheek where Gu Kaifeng's kiss had landed, covering it with his palm. He glanced back at the place where the mother cat had lain, now invisible to his temporarily sealed Yin-yang Eye. Kneeling, he guessed at the presence he once would have seen, and he extended his hand into the void, imagining the cat's head beneath his palm. "Your kittens are safe with my roommate in our dorm. The school doesn't allow us to bring pets but we'll find them good homes, don't worry," he murmured, more to himself than to the ghostly cat he could no longer see. "I wish you could understand me," he added, his voice tinged with sadness.

Lin Feiran continued to speak to the empty air, his voice gentle. "Meow, meow, meow." He tried his best to bridge the unseen gap with familiar sounds.

His eyes shone with sincerity, the dark pupils glimmering, reflected as clearly as the surface of a smooth pebble nestled in the refreshing caress of a babbling brook. His expression was an open book, his emotions plainly visible, every bit of his compassion and empathy vividly displayed on his face.

As the class bell rang, he knew it was time to leave. Placing the umbrella to cover the cat's body, he promised, "I'll be back to bury you at noon. Hang in there."

A sudden warmth at his ankle and a soft meow caught him off guard—a fleeting connection that felt too real. He was certain that his Yin-yang Eye ability was dormant. He spun around, catching a glimpse of the air ahead shaping into the faint outline of a cat. It was as if the cat had donned an invisibility cloak, its translucent form darting forward a few steps before blending with the breeze and fading with the chill of the late autumn rain.

It was the moment the soul had finally let go of the burden of unfulfilled wishes and stepped forward into the cycle of rebirth.

Lin Feiran stared at the spot where the ghostly cat had disappeared, his heart caught in a whirlwind of despair and bewilderment. He stood frozen, lost in contemplation, until the greeting "Good morning, sir!" echoing from a classroom on the ground floor snapped him out of his trance. With the realization that he was late for the Language Arts class and still needed to give an excuse for Gu Kaifeng's absence, he was jolted into action and raced toward the school building's entrance.

Dashing to the fourth floor, Lin Feiran arrived just moments late. Gasping for air, he explained to Ms Li that Gu Kaifeng was suffering from a stomach ache and that his tardiness was due to taking care of him. Ms Li, her expression softening at the mention of Gu Kaifeng, let Lin Feiran off with just a mild scolding before he hurried back to his seat.

Halfway through class, he received a text message from Gu Kaifeng: *Honey, you in class?*

Lin Feiran: ...*Cut the nonsense.*

A photo popped up, showing four kittens, their fur fluffed up and clearly blow-dried, huddled together in a spacious cardboard box, snug and dry. In one corner lay a round object, probably a hand warmer, snugly wrapped in a sports vest, which one curious kitten stretched out a tiny paw to touch.

Following this, Gu Kaifeng texted: *The kittens are all good. Don't stress.*

As Ms Li turned back to the blackboard, Lin Feiran swiftly concealed his phone behind a pile of books on his desk and typed back: *Where did you find the box?*

Gu Kaifeng: *Caught the dorm supervisor during his rounds and he gave it to me.*

Lin Feiran was slightly surprised: *!! He didn't take the kittens away?*

With a smug emoji, Gu Kaifeng replied: *I handed them over, but quickly inundated him with their list of needs. I explained that they were barely twenty days old, requiring special milk powder and syringe feedings every few hours, not to mention the necessity of keeping them warm and the likelihood of overnight disturbances. Before I even finished, he was so overwhelmed that he practically handed them back, especially after I promised to secure them homes by the weekend.*

The image of Gu Kaifeng lecturing like a concerned parent made Lin Feiran chuckle under his breath.

Curious, Lin Feiran inquired: *Did we lose any dorm points over this?*

At their school, dorms started each term with ten points, losing them for infractions like messiness, unauthorized gadgets, or

unauthorized pets. Dropping to zero meant a month of cleaning duty for the corridors for both roommates.

Gu Kaifeng: *Almost, but I argued back. Said I was not doing it for fun, penalizing me would be discouraging me from saving lives and I saved four. He finally caved after I wore him down.*

Lin Feiran smiled. He remembered Gu Kaifeng's natural charm and playful banter, stirring an inexplicable flutter in his heart.

Then came another text: *Though, he did dock a point. He saw your dirty underwear and socks.*

Lin Feiran blushed: *Ehh. It was just a few pairs, Not a huge pile. I'll wash them tonight.*

Having lived at the boarding school for just shy of two months, Lin Feiran, who had been coddled at home without ever needing to lift a finger, found some of his old habits hard to shake, making him somewhat lackadaisical about doing chores. Being directly called out by Gu Kaifeng like this sent waves of embarrassment crashing over him.

As he stewed in embarrassment, Gu Kaifeng added: *Don't worry, I've washed them for you.*

*What!!! Gu Kaifeng washed my underwear?!*

The realization hit Lin Feiran like a bolt of lightning, almost jolting him from his seat. Just as he was about to reply, an intense chill pervaded the air directly in front of him, sending a shiver through his body. In that instant, his Yin-yang Eye sprang to life, unveiling Old Principal standing ominously close, and he must have been standing there for quite some time. Old Principal's damaged, half-faced visage, marked by disappointment and anger, loomed over him. His skull, wedged between Lin Feiran

and his phone, tilted forward, letting a stream of eerie fluids drip onto Lin's phone, textbook, and arm...

"Ah...!" Lin Feiran shouted, startled, and quickly tapped Gu Kaifeng's chair with his foot, seeking the residue yang energy there to quell his supernatural sight.

"Lin Feiran, stand up!" As soon as his Yin-yang Eye ability was disabled, Lin Feiran heard Ms Li's furious shout fill the classroom.

Lin Feiran let out a heavy sigh and quickly slid his phone under his textbook. The scolding that followed was intense, forcing him to stand in utter embarrassment until the lunch bell rang. Caught between the stern gazes of Old Principal and Ms Li, he didn't dare sneak a look at his phone for the rest of the class. Mentally, he crafted a scenario where he gave Gu Kaifeng, that charming yet exasperating troublemaker, a thorough verbal lashing—eight hundred times, no less.

As the lunch bell rang, Lin Feiran eagerly checked his phone, bracing himself to scold Gu Kaifeng for his audacious claim about washing his underwear without permission. He had meticulously rehearsed a scathing critique spanning "eight hundred words," laced with phrases such as "utterly unacceptable," "how shameless," and "I'm genuinely upset." It was a masterpiece of indignation with his "exceptional" writing skills, elevated by these well-chosen "idioms".

However, Lin Feiran's anger began to wane as he read through Gu Kaifeng's flurry of new messages, going from teasing to apologetic.

Gu Kaifeng: *Your underwear's fabric is surprisingly nice.*

Gu Kaifeng: *Why the silent treatment?*

Gu Kaifeng: *Are you mad, honey? It was just a joke. I didn't wash them. Didn't even touch them. Don't believe me? Check when you get to the dorm. And the supervisor? He didn't dock any points. He didn't even notice.*

Gu Kaifeng: *I admit, I was wrong. Please, pay some attention to me.*

Gu Kaifeng: *Need me to write that eight-hundred-word essay as penance?*

As Lin Feiran went through Gu Kaifeng's messages, the angry bird Lin Feiran changed back to the sticky rice cake Lin Feiran...

Persuaded by Gu Kaifeng's words, Lin Feiran found his anger slipping away. He replied much more gently than he intended to as he walked: *Just got your messages. Forget the essay.*

Gu Kaifeng: *Finally acknowledged me, huh?*

Lin Feiran: *Got punished with standing in class. I couldn't check my phone.*

Gu Kaifeng responded instantly: *So, you're not mad at me?*

*Still trying to wiggle out of it—how shameless!!* Lin Feiran was taken aback by Gu Kaifeng's boldness, his frustration bubbled back to the surface. He stormed out of the classroom, fuming, and vented into a voice message with the fury of a summer storm. *"Yes! Of course, I'm mad!"*

"...You're going to make me deaf," came Gu Kaifeng's voice, not from the phone but from right behind him.

Lin Feiran froze. Before he could react, he was swept into a firm embrace, his brief moment of weightlessness ending in Gu Kaifeng's arms.

"I've been following you," Gu Kaifeng said with a hint of

amusement in his voice. "You were so caught up in texting, you didn't see me once?"

A shiver of surprise ran through Lin Feiran as if he'd been electrified. He wriggled free, turning to face Gu Kaifeng, "I thought you were in the dorm?"

Gu Kaifeng raised the bag he was holding. "Went to the infirmary for some syringes. For the kittens."

Peeking inside, Lin Feiran saw several boxes of milk.

"These kittens need special milk, but this lactose-free kind will do for now, considering there's no pet store nearby. It's safe for kittens as well," Gu Kaifeng explained.

"Okay," Lin Feiran agreed, nodding, his knowledge of pets virtually non-existent.

With a playful nudge, Gu Kaifeng leaned closer, "Admit it, I'm thoughtful, caring, and dependable, right?"

Lin Feiran avoided eye contact, his face stoic as he deadpanned, "No."

Yet, Lin Feiran's eyes darted away, a clear giveaway of his unspoken affection, eliciting a sly smile from Gu Kaifeng. *Little Sticky is lying again.*

After the rain ceased, Lin Feiran found the housemaster and obtained a shovel from the storage room. The recent downpour had softened the earth, making it easier to dig. Behind the academic building, they set to work on burying the mother cat. Gu Kaifeng took the shovel after giving the bags to Lin Feiran and quickly dug a grave by the wall. With care, Lin Feiran laid the cat on the earth, and Gu Kaifeng filled the grave with soil.

Though done in haste, the burial brought Lin Feiran a sense

of closure, comforting him with the thought that the mother cat was at peace in her next life. Hopefully, she wouldn't mind their swift goodbye. They returned the shovel and grabbed some food from the canteen before heading back to their dorm.

The four kittens were huddled together, dozing beside the warmth of the hand warmer. At the sound of Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng entering, one kitten made a valiant effort to stand, its little legs trembling. Lin Feiran stroked its forehead with a feather-light touch, coaxing a tiny mew from it. This moment of fragile beauty drew a very pure smile from Lin Feiran. Looking over at Gu Kaifeng, eyes sparkling, he exclaimed, "These kittens are too adorable!"

As Gu Kaifeng filled a syringe with lactose-free milk, he warmly concurred, "They really are."

Utterly enchanted, Lin Feiran positioned himself comfortably in front of the kittens, hands on the chair between his legs and swaying, envisioning a life filled with the joy of pets. "How can they be this cute? I wish I could have one... I have to get one after I graduate from university..." he pondered aloud, lost in thought.

Gu Kaifeng, unable to hold back a chuckle at Lin Feiran's heartfelt words, came over with the syringe and the leftover milk. Teasingly mimicking Lin Feiran's tone, he began, "How can Ranran be this adorable? I wish I could date him. I have to make him mine after I graduate from high school..."

"Gu Kaifeng!" Lin Feiran protested, his cheeks flushing. "Stop teasing!"

Gu Kaifeng quieted down, though a mischievous smile lingered on his lips. He tenderly fed a kitten with the syringe. Lin

Feiran watched intently, his expression filled with admiration.

"You're quite good at this," Lin Feiran remarked, impressed by the unexpected patience of the usually cheeky Gu Kaifeng.

"I got some practice with Xiaxia when he was just a pup," Gu Kaifeng responded. He showed Lin Feiran how to gently feed the kittens before handing him a milk-filled syringe. "Give it a go. It's easy, just be careful. Don't let them choke."

"I won't!" Lin Feiran assured, carefully taking the syringe and concentrating hard on being gentle with the kittens. Gu Kaifeng chuckled. "Looks like they're in good hands."

He opened the packed food and playfully offered Lin Feiran a piece of meat with his chopsticks. "I'll take care of you while you care for them."

Engrossed in caring for the kittens, Lin Feiran mindlessly accepted.

As Gu Kaifeng spoon-fed Lin Feiran, he shared with a content smile, "I checked them earlier, two boys and two girls."

Lin Feiran hummed contentedly, his smile widening with the pride of a parent who had both daughters and sons.

Gu Kaifeng couldn't help but share his amusement at Lin Feiran's reaction, "I've named them already: Mung Bean Cake, Yun Pian Cake, Glutinous Rice Cake, and Egg Cake."[10]

Lin Feiran chose not to comment on the names.

Unexpectedly, Gu Kaifeng gently wiped away a sauce smudge from the corner of Lin Feiran's mouth, continuing softly, "And you're my little sticky rice cake."

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10 Mung Bean Cake, Yun Pian Cake, Glutinous Rice Cake, and Egg Cake: These are traditional Chinese desserts.

The intimacy of the gesture caught Lin Feiran off-guard, his breath hitching as he turned his head away, flustered.

"Hmm, what would I be?" Gu Kaifeng teased, inviting Lin Feiran's input.

"You'd be Wotou," Lin Feiran retorted, his tone mocking.

Gu Kaifeng laughed, sending Lin Feiran a teasing wink, "Well, perfect. Wotous are hard."

Lin Feiran found himself at a loss for words again.

*How have our conversations always ended up here? Prince Charming? As if!*

"The one with the yellow fur on its leg will be Egg Cake, and the one with green eyes, Mung Bean Cake," Lin Feiran steered the conversation back to safer territory. Halfway through, a sudden sadness hit him, and he complained to Gu Kaifeng, "Why give them names? Now it'll be harder to let them go."

"How about we get a cat after we graduate?" Gu Kaifeng proposed, gently running his fingers through Lin Feiran's bangs. His hair, as soft as his gentle nature, felt silky despite it having been trimmed just last Saturday. The sensation from his fingers sent a wave of warmth through Gu Kaifeng.

"We can't keep any after high school. University dorms don't allow pets either," Lin Feiran pointed out, pulling away from Gu Kaifeng's touch.

Gu Kaifeng then let his gaze drift to the rice he was stirring and proposed, "When the time comes, we'll aim for the same university, find a place nearby, and keep a couple of cats. You can play with them, and I'll take care of the litter box. How does that sound?"

"Let's not talk about cleaning the litter box while I'm eating,"

Lin Feiran muttered, oblivious to the broader implications of Gu Kaifeng's suggestion.

"You've missed the important part, honey," Gu Kaifeng teased, nudging Lin Feiran's chin. "Did you just agree to us going to the same university and living together?"

Lin Feiran's cheeks flushed, eyes widened, and he protested loudly, though with weak points. "Since when did I agree? I just didn't have the energy to argue!"

In his haste, a grain of rice flew from his mouth.

Laughter erupted from Gu Kaifeng, his whole frame shaking with uncontained mirth.

Lin Feiran, anxiety clear in his tugs at Gu Kaifeng's sleeve, insisted, "I'm serious, I'm not planning on attending the same university as you."

"Sure, sure," Gu Kaifeng replied nonchalantly, one eyebrow raised. "Our grades are pretty close, you know. There were only a few ranks separating us from the last exam," he added with a cheeky grin. "If I sneak a look at your university choices from school, and copy them exactly to mine, where will you hide then?"

Lin Feiran's frustration peaked. He aimed to slam his hand down on the table for emphasis, but he misjudged the distance and ended up awkwardly hitting his thigh instead.

"Gu Kaifeng!" he shouted angrily.

"Yes?" Gu Kaifeng replied in a soft tone, his voice dripping with feigned innocence. He then offered Lin Feiran a cup of green tea macchiato. "Have some tea, it might help you cool off a bit."

Still seething, Lin Feiran took a defiant gulp of the tea before

turning to the kittens, his frustration softening with each stroke of the kittens' heads.

"Oh, I meant to ask you earlier," Gu Kaifeng said, casually offering Lin Feiran the straw from his drink. "How did you find the kittens?"

Lin Feiran hesitated, his lips twitching slightly as he struggled with what to say.

Picking up on Lin Feiran's reluctance, Gu Kaifeng ventured a guess, "Were you feeding the cats there?"

Lin Feiran, unable to reveal the whole truth, simply nodded. "Um... yes."

*My Ranran is such a kind and caring soul, always ready to help yet too modest to boast about his good deeds—makes me wanna fuck him right now.* Gu Kaifeng mused, blissfully ignorant of the truth.

After their meal and caring for the kittens, Lin Feiran took a photo of the four sleeping furballs and posted it online. He detailed their rescue, including ages, genders, and the spot where they were found. Tagging some renowned pet bloggers, he hoped their reach would find the kittens loving homes. He even shared the quirky names Gu Kaifeng had lovingly chosen, hoping that they might stick with future owners. Hesitating briefly, Lin Feiran let out a sigh and hit "post."

In his heart, Lin Feiran had become attached to those names, wishing they could have kept the kittens themselves.

# Chapter 10

Gu Kaifeng unfortunately fell ill the next day, likely due to his walk in the rain without a jacket while carrying the kittens back to the dorm. After enduring the morning's four major classes, he was granted leave by Ms Zheng to rest in the dorm, likely missing the afternoon sessions and evening study period.

This was the first time Lin Feiran had spent such a long period away from Gu Kaifeng since acquiring his Yin-yang Eye ability. By the time afternoon classes ended, Lin Feiran had nearly depleted all the residual yang energy from Gu Kaifeng's textbooks, stationery, and even his desk and chair. When the final bell rang, Lin Feiran pocketed the last pen, still charged with yang energy, and headed to the canteen, texting Gu Kaifeng along the way.

Lin Feiran texted: *How's your cold? Feeling any better?*

Gu Kaifeng's reply came as a voice message, his voice husky from the cold, yet unexpectedly alluring: *How am I supposed to*

*recover without seeing you for four hours?*

Blushing amidst the crowd headed to the canteen, Lin Feiran bit back through gritted teeth: *You must be delirious to talk such nonsense.*

Before Gu Kaifeng could respond, he quickly texted: *What do you want to eat? I'll bring it to you.*

Gu Kaifeng: *Beef rice, milk tea.*

Lin Feiran: *Anything else?*

Gu Kaifeng's voice message came with a playful tone: *And some little sticky rice cakes.*

Irritated, Lin Feiran shot back: *Hey, can't you be serious for just one second?!*

Feigning innocence, Gu Kaifeng replied: *Isn't there a place on the canteen's second floor that sells rice cakes? Grab me a box, please.*

Indeed, there was a dessert shop on the second floor selling red bean rice cakes. Knowing Gu Kaifeng's usual indifference towards sweets and detecting the suggestive tone in his request, Lin Feiran couldn't shake off the feeling that Gu Kaifeng was intentionally teasing him. Lin Feiran couldn't believe he fell for it.

Frustrated, Lin Feiran drafted a lengthy reply, hesitated, erased it and replaced it with a curt response: *Got it.*

Gu Kaifeng: *What's with the overthinking?*

Choosing not to engage further, Lin Feiran pocketed his phone and purchased two servings of beef rice and milk teas. For the milk teas, he specified one to be iced with double boba and the other hot with less sugar. Despite his internal complaints, he also picked up a small box of rice cakes from the

second floor, grumbling about Gu Kaifeng's fickle preferences—less sugar here, no ice there, and now a whole box of sweets.

*Damn it! He's just trying to provoke me!* Lin Feiran thought, clearly annoyed.

The canteen was bustling, and Lin Feiran spent about ten minutes queuing for food. Concerned the yang energy-infused pen in his pocket wouldn't last much longer from his absorption, he dashed back to the dormitory. After all, he didn't want the risk of seeing ghastly-looking ghosts to ruin his appetite.

Bursting into their room, Lin Feiran breathlessly wheeled a chair to Gu Kaifeng's bedside and laid out the meal. "Eat up while it's hot," he urged.

Gu Kaifeng, propping himself up and touched by Lin Feiran's eagerness, asked, "Why the rush?" A blend of warmth and concern in his voice.

Catching his breath, Lin Feiran, sitting on the edge of the bed, drew a large amount of yang energy with his butt and replied with more composure, "Didn't want to miss evening study."

Gu Kaifeng, amused, didn't press further.

Lin Feiran took on the role of caretaker as he opened the lunch box, split the chopsticks, inserted a straw into the milk tea and opened the box of rice cakes. With mock sternness, he insisted. "You're finishing all of it."

Gu Kaifeng chuckled, taking the box of five rice cakes and sniffing them under his nose. "Oh, I can't."

"Why not?" Lin Feiran challenged, puzzled. "Isn't this your order?"

With a playful glint in his eye, Gu Kaifeng squeezed one of

the soft white rice cakes. "I have my loyalties. No matter how many lookalikes there are, I only have eyes for one."

Lin Feiran was momentarily lost for words, caught off guard by Gu Kaifeng's playful setup.

Gu Kaifeng took one rice cake in his palm and sniffed it again. "Mmm, smells really good." He then kissed the rice cake before taking a bite.

Lin Feiran was at a loss for words....

*Is he crazy? Kissing a rice cake of all things?*

Gu Kaifeng extended his tongue to taste the red bean filling as if engaged in a serious tasting session and remarked, "The filling's really sweet."

Lin Feiran had never seen anyone consume a rice cake in such a suggestive manner. He had the urge to punch Gu Kaifeng for his antics.

Gu Kaifeng finished the rice cake, his gaze openly admiring Lin Feiran, unabashed as he declared, "This little sticky rice cake is truly delectable."

*Calm down, I mustn't react or else there will be even more teasing!*

Lin Feiran opted for silence, focusing instead on his beef rice and removing onions with feigned indifference while his burning cheeks betrayed his embarrassment.

At that moment, Gu Kaifeng couldn't hold back and let out a snort of laughter.

"You're crazy!" Lin Feiran's patience snapped at Gu Kaifeng's teasing laughter. He swung at Gu Kaifeng, who effortlessly caught him by the waist and pulled him close, making them both tumble onto the bed.

As Lin Feiran tried to get up, Gu Kaifeng gently cradled his head, drawing close with his fever-warmed face and setting Lin Feiran's heart racing. Lin Feiran's lips, which had been pressed tightly together, now parted slightly as if he wasn't sure whether to protest or do something else.

However, instead of the kiss Lin Feiran had tensely anticipated, Gu Kaifeng simply pressed their foreheads together, their noses brushing lightly, leaving their lips just a whisper apart.

"Honey, feel my fever?" Gu Kaifeng whispered, a playful smirk on his lips.

Lin Feiran's lips closed, then hesitantly parted. In a voice that was clear, youthful, and imbued with a touch of shy unease, he asked, "Have you taken any medicine?"

Shaking his head, a mischievous sparkle in his eyes, Gu Kaifeng murmured, "Waiting for you." Their nose tips brushed as Gu Kaifeng shook his head.

"Stop playing around," Lin Feiran said, trying to pull back, but Gu Kaifeng gently held him in place.

With their foreheads still touching, Gu Kaifeng teased, "Thought I'd kiss you?"

The instant his barely understood, hidden feelings were unexpectedly revealed, Lin Feiran denied with a fluster, loudly retorting, "Never! I'm not lost in fantasies like you!"

Gu Kaifeng's laughter filled the air, his gaze lingering on Lin Feiran's lips. "Didn't want to get you sick," he admitted, his hand caressing Lin Feiran's neck tenderly. "Otherwise, I would've kissed you breathless."

Prying Gu Kaifeng's hand from the back of his neck, Lin Feiran stood up abruptly. "I'll get your medicine."

Remembering the surplus of medicine Gu Kaifeng had bought for him during his last bout of fever, Lin Feiran opened the cabinet and bent down to sift through the medical box at the bottom, unintentionally presenting his backside. Gu Kaifeng's attention was captured by the view, his eyes lighting up with a predatory intensity, like a wolf famished for days, as he observed Lin Feiran's butt in his black uniform trousers.

Feeling something was off from behind, Lin Feiran quickly turned around. Catching Gu Kaifeng's unabashed stare, his cheeks flamed, and he instinctively tugged at his uniform jacket for more coverage. "Keep staring, and you're on your own," he scolded, his voice a mix of embarrassment and irritation.

Gu Kaifeng quickly adverted his gave to look at the floor, his plea almost sheepish. "Alright, alright, I'll behave. Please look after me."

"Might as well set you on fire," Lin Feiran muttered under his breath.

Gu Kaifeng's laughter broke free, mischief twinkling in his eyes. "Or just 'light my fire,'" he quipped, playfully twisting Lin Feiran's words into a flirtation.

*My roommate is such a pain!* Lin Feiran grumbled to himself, irked as he took a pill for the cold and one for the fever. He picked up a fresh bottle of mineral water, then turned to see Gu Kaifeng leaning pitifully against his pillow, his cheeks feverishly red. Recalling that Gu Kaifeng had fallen ill after rescuing kittens in the rain lessened Lin Feiran's annoyance. He resolved to take better care of his troublesome roommate. He diluted the mineral water with some hot water from the thermos to get it to just the right temperature, even going as far as checking it

against his hand.

"Time for your pills," Lin Feiran said, his voice cold, a stark contrast to the warm water he had meticulously prepared.

Gu Kaifeng, in an act of feigned helplessness, brushed his lips against Lin Feiran's palm to take the pills, sending an unexpected jolt through Lin Feiran and making his hands tremble.

"Where are your hands?" Lin Feiran said through gritted teeth, unable to hide his frustration.

Gu Kaifeng glanced at Lin Feiran's flushed face, smirked, and then, as if his hands had magically reappeared, accepted the cup and took heavy gulps. "Perfect temperature, thanks," he said, wiping his mouth afterwards.

"I should've scalded some sense in you," Lin Feiran shot back.

Gu Kaifeng was taken aback and then burst into laughter while holding his head. The joy of teasing Lin Feiran momentarily eased his discomfort.

After tending to Gu Kaifeng, Lin Feiran hastily finished his own dinner and tidied up the lunchbox. He then attended to feeding the kittens with a syringe and milk, murmuring to them, "How were Egg Cake and Glutinous Rice Cake today? Keep your distance from Gu Kaifeng. He's such a pervert. Mung Bean Cake and Yun Pian Cake, you two especially..."

"I'm only like that with you," Gu Kaifeng protested.

Lin Feiran continued petting the kittens, stunned by Gu Kaifeng's bold admission.

Lin Feiran's plea for help on social media caught the eye of several prominent pet bloggers, sparking interest from potential adopters. If all went according to plan, the "cake" kittens would

have new homes by the following Monday.

After feeding the kittens and tucking them back into their box, it was time for the evening study session. Lin Feiran contemplated which of Gu Kaifeng's belongings he could take to class as yang energy shields. Gu Kaifeng's recent act of affection—licking Lin Feiran's palm while taking his medicine—had granted him temporary protection, but it would only last an hour according to Lin Ferian's previous experiences. With the evening not nearly over, Lin Feiran needed a more lasting solution. He couldn't imagine what he might encounter with his Yin-yang Eye activated on the way back to the dorm from the academic building.

While he was pondering, Gu Kaifeng, still confined to his bed, proposed, "Feiran, why not study here tonight? I'll tell Ms Zheng about my fever. She'll understand if you have to stay to help me."

"Would Ms Zheng agree to that?" Lin Feiran asked, sceptical.

"She will if I ask. Just double-check with her, okay?" Gu Kaifeng reassured him, drawing Lin Feiran close to feel his fevered cheek.

Flustered, Lin Feiran quickly withdrew his hand, grabbed his lunch box and hurried out.

Gu Kaifeng's playful pleas echoed behind him like a broken record. "Ranran, please stay with me here. Ranran, please stay with me..."

"Stop, I'm on it, aren't I?" Lin Feiran stamped his foot with authority as he got ready to leave and make the request.

Flustered by Gu Kaifeng's teasing, Lin-little sticky rice cake sought leave from Ms Zheng, collected their homework, and

returned to the dorm. He shifted the desks beside the bed for convenience and settled in beside Gu Kaifeng. Enveloping in a comforting cocoon of yang energy, he started on the assignments.

Gu Kaifeng tried to sit up, curiosity piqued. "What's on the agenda? More homework?"

"Not too much," Lin Feiran replied, placing his hands firmly on Gu Kaifeng's shoulders and pushing him back down. "Rest now, especially after the fever medicine. You can tackle the homework later." He commanded with an earnest tone.

However, Gu Kaifeng became restless after just a minute. He bent his knees and slid down into the bed. He tried to embrace Lin Feiran but only triggered a bout of coughing in the process. Once he recovered, he didn't relent and pinched Lin Feiran's waist, teasing despite his weakened condition, "Babe, your waist is so slim."

Lin Feiran, though annoyed, managed to secure Gu Kaifeng back under the covers, admonishing him to focus on recovery rather than flirtation. "Please lie down. Focus on getting better. Do you Flirt Even in Death?"[11] he chided in genuine concern.

"Mm, can't resist when I see you." Gu Kaifeng gave a feeble nod.

"Try harder." Lin Feiran replied icily.

"Mwah." Gu Kaifeng pursed his lips and sent Lin Ferian an air kiss.

At his wit's end, Lin Feiran could only offer silence.

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11 Flirt Even in Death : A play on words on the popular song from the rock band Shin, I'll Love Even in Death.

Lin Feiran kept at his writing for a bit more, wrapping up just one last tough question when Gu Kaifeng, who'd been eyeing him intently, moved closer once more and suggested, "Feiran, let's take a five-minute break?"

"You say I'm clingy, calling me 'little sticky rice cake' all the time," Muttering under his breath, Lin Feiran couldn't help but retort. "You are the real sticky rice cake."

"My head's killing me," Gu Kaifeng moaned, wriggling on the bed until his head was in Lin Feiran's lap. His voice, made deeper by his cold, took on an uncharacteristically whiny tone as he pleaded, "Babe, could you give me a head massage?"

Feeling awkward, Lin Feiran hesitated, "I'm not sure how to give a proper massage..."

Gu Kaifeng guided Lin Feiran's hand to his temple, seeking relief. "Right here. It really hurts."

The abrupt transition from Gu Kaifeng's typical detached and composed demeanour to his current clingy and plaintive state caught Lin Feiran off guard. He found himself bewildered and thrown off by this unexpected side of Gu Kaifeng, letting himself be led to take care of him.

As Lin Feiran began to massage, his hands drifted instinctively to other pressure points, becoming more absorbed in the task. Midway, Gu Kaifeng seized Lin Feiran's right hand, scrutinizing it as if it were a relic of untold value. Lin Feiran's hands, honed by years of piano playing, carried the elegance of his craft. His fingers were long and refined, bones and joints delicately defined as if meticulously carved by an artisan. His skin was fair and smooth, looking as cold and pristine as marble, and indeed, his hand was cool to the touch.

"You have beautiful hands," he whispered, pressing a soft kiss to Lin Feiran's fingertips.

"Of course they are. I've even turned down magazine shoots before." Lin Feiran took great pride in his hands, so he accepted the compliment and basked in a moment of self-admiration, his tail wagging with delight. However, his pleasure soon gave way as he chided, "But no kissing!" as he tried to pull away.

With a smile, Gu Kaifeng's grip tightened, playfully drawing Lin Feiran's hand closer. "They're cold. Let me warm them up on my chest," he teased, guiding Lin Feiran's hand under his pyjamas.

Before Lin Feiran could react, he brushed against a strange, pointed, erect object...

Lin Feiran froze, and his mind was a whirlwind of shock and embarrassment.

*Fuck! I gotta amputate this hand!*

Gu Kaifeng's teasing escalated, "Honey, are you being naughty?"

"Hey, what the heck?!" Lin Feiran, unwittingly cast as a pervert, yanked his hand back with all the might he could muster before hastily rubbing it on Gu Kaifeng's quilt. With his face burning and ears hot, he objected, "I wasn't the one who reached out! You grabbed me first..."

Laughing, Gu Kaifeng shrugged off the protest, "I don't care. What's done is done."

Indignant, Lin Feiran accused, "You tricked me!"

Unfazed, Gu Kaifeng countered, "All's fair in love and war. Now it's my turn." He moved to return the "favour". Given his position on Lin Feiran's lap, it was all too easy for him to slip his

hand under Lin Feiran's shirt. Lin Feiran let out a yelp, squirming to dodge the unwanted touch. He tried to grab Gu Kaifeng's wandering hand, only to be met with resistance as Gu Kaifeng rose to sit up. Their playful skirmish concluded with Lin Feiran pinned beneath Gu Kaifeng, a stark reminder that even in a weakened state, Gu Kaifeng's strength was unmatched.

Three seconds later, Lin Feiran let out a soft, kitten-like whimper, followed quickly by a sharp hiss of pain from Gu Kaifeng.

In another three seconds, Gu Kaifeng sat up, a mixture of satisfaction and discomfort on his face, gingerly rubbing his shoulder where a fresh bite mark could be seen.

Meanwhile, Lin Feiran had transformed into a tightly bundled silkworm cocoon, burrowing himself deep into Gu Kaifeng's quilt, with only his flushed face peeking out. He muttered a curse through clenched teeth, "Damn you, you freak!"

Holding his forehead, Gu Kaifeng couldn't contain his laughter and shook the entire bed while letting it out.

The lingering sensation of that brief touch on his nipple refused to go away. Lin Feiran clenched his fists tight, letting the sharp pain from his nails digging into his palms drive away the ludicrous thoughts like "it actually felt nice." Wrapping his quilt more snugly around him, he grumbled resentfully, "I'm just too kind... anyone else would've sent you six feet under by now."

He then turned towards Gu Kaifeng with a sorrowful reproach. "Aren't you going to thank me for sparing your life?"

Gu Kaifeng responded with a playful offer, "How would you like me to express my gratitude? With my body?"

Frustrated, Lin Feiran forcefully sat down on the bed, his

action saying more than words, and faced Gu Kaifeng squarely. "You can't do that again. Say what you like, but keep your hands to yourself," he declared, attempting to sound diplomatic.

Gu Kaifeng, ever the provocateur and not missing a beat, lightly brushed his finger, the one that just touched Lin Feiran and challenged, "And what if I do touch you again?"

Maintaining a serious expression and adopting a tone of serious warning, Lin Feiran responded, "I'll be forced to take violent measures against you."

Gu Kaifeng's eyes flickered with amusement as he scrutinized Lin Feiran's delicate, slender hands. "Ever been in a real fight?" he teased.

Lin Feiran answered with a bashful yet defiant glance away. "Of course, I have."

Gu Kaifeng played alone with a knowing "Hmm." *Another lie from Little Sticky.*

Encouraged by Gu Kaifeng's response, Lin Feiran seized the opportunity to craft a more dramatic persona, making himself seem like a former rebel. However, his attempt at a menacing glare only came across as endearing due to his wide, innocent eyes. Deepening his voice in an attempt at gravitas, he boasted, "I was known for causing trouble in middle school—always in fights, never in class. Teachers couldn't tame me. It's only now I've changed... But don't test me. I won't hesitate to revert to my old ways."

*Your brother Ran here was a legend in the streets. Fierce and untouchable.*

*And don't let the good looks deceive you—beneath this charming exterior lies a wild past!*

Gu Kaifeng bobbed his head like a bird pecking at seeds, feigning fear, and earnestly assured, "I see."

Ironically, Gu Kaifeng was the true troublemaker back in middle school. His parents, often busy with their work and feeling guilty for the lack of time spent with him, compensated by giving him an overly generous allowance. This freedom without supervision shaped Gu Kaifeng into someone arrogant and impulsive.

His parents hoped the disciplined environment of a boarding school would temper his excessive habits and foster early independence, hence they sent him to this high school. Indeed, the past year had seen a remarkable shift in him, especially after connecting deeply with someone who touched his heart. Now, he hardly resembled the unruly youth he once was.

The truly reformed person, Gu Kaifeng, offered a feigned promise, "I won't touch you without reason."

The so-called reformed person, "Brother Ran," nodded solemnly at the acknowledgement, let go of his quilt and quickly adjusted his dishevelled shirt before returning to his math homework.

With the fever reducer taking effect, Gu Kaifeng's temperature started to stabilize. Feeling much better, he cosied up with the quilt around his shoulders next to Lin Feiran to dive into his own stack of homework. They remained engrossed in their studies until the clock struck 10 p.m., at which point Lin Feiran closed his notebook and stretched, announcing, "That's it for me."

Gu Kaifeng, still battling the remnants of his fever, had only

managed to make it halfway through his chemistry homework. Exhausted and unable to proceed, he began copying Lin Feiran's answers. Amidst this, he teased, "Ranran, something has been really bothering me."

Lin Feiran was immediately anxious. "What is it?"

Looking at Lin Feiran's cryptic handwriting of the chemical formulas, Gu Kaifeng chuckled, "How do those beautiful hands of yours manage such awful handwriting?"

Flustered by the playful jab at his weakest aspects, Lin Feiran blushed, admitting, "I... I just haven't practised enough..."

With a playful smirk, Gu Kaifeng lowered his head and kissed Lin Feiran's notebook. "It's ugly but in a cute way."

Lin Feiran, utterly taken aback, exclaimed, "Now you're after my notebook?!"

*This was absolute madness!*

Gu Kaifeng was undeterred. "In the future," he proposed, "I, your hubby, will guide you in improving your handwriting, hand in hand, and you'll help me learn to sing, lip to lip."

Lin Feiran, exasperated, responded, "Tone-deafness isn't cured by practice. You're hopeless in that regard. Even gods can't help."

Gu Kaifeng, focusing on the more flirtatious aspects of his statement, replied, "The important parts were 'hubby', 'hand in hand', and 'lip to lip'."

Used to being teased by now, Lin Feiran was speechless with himself.

*Did I really not fight back just now? What was going through my head? Gosh!*

Flushed with annoyance and a touch of shame, Lin Feiran

didn't hold back and gave Gu Kaifeng a sharp pinch.

*He was the epitome of "ferocious and ruthless!"*

After completing his bold move, Lin Feiran quickly snatched up his basin and rushed to the wash station, washing his face and hands of the act before brushing his teeth to end the day.

Gu Kaifeng's sickness came on fast but left just as quickly. After downing his meds, he enjoyed a blissful night's sleep and sprang up the next morning, bursting with vitality.

Even Gu Kaifeng Junior, that was pressed against Lin Feiran's butt, was particularly energetic!

Upon waking up, Lin Feiran was momentarily frozen by their proximity. He quickly sat up and clutched his bottom.

Despite Lin Feiran's resolve to keep their sleeping arrangements strictly platonic following Gu Kaifeng's confession and unwelcome kiss. Gu Kaifeng's persistence, coupled with his physical strength and his role as Lin Feiran's sole source of yang energy at school, left Lin Feiran with little choice but to share the bed at night. The dilemma then became not whether to share it but how to position himself in Gu Kaifeng's embrace: face Gu Kaifeng or turn his back? Ultimately, Lin Feiran knew he couldn't risk estranging himself from his crucial human shield.

Pointing an accusatory finger at Gu Kaifeng, who was feigning innocence, Lin Feiran issued a final warning, "If you dare poke my butt with that thing again, I'll snap it off!" He punctuated his warning with a firm gesture to underline his point with sound effects.

"Oh, really? Honey, show me how you'd do that," Gu Kai-

feng, always the teaser, pulled Lin Feiran's hand, guiding him, "First, you need to hold it firmly with both hands..."

"Noooo!" Lin Feiran sprang from the bed like a spooked rabbit, hair tousled, and made a beeline for the wash station to clean his face and brush his teeth.

*Yes, he was that shy, already backing out at the very first step!*

As they wrapped up their morning routine and fed the kittens, they headed out for breakfast before the morning study session. Lin Feiran's mind was heavy with the weight of the upcoming midterms, which were scheduled for the next Tuesday. Aware of the distractions that had been pulling his attention away from his studies in the past two weeks, he had meticulously identified his weak spots in each subject and was intent on addressing them systematically. His aim was clear: to maintain his ranking.

Gu Kaifeng, sensing the urgency and importance of this period of time for Lin Feiran, considerately toned down his usual playful demeanour, offering a quieter form of support that spoke volumes of his understanding.

As the weekend neared, they turned their focus to the plans they had made for the kittens. Lin Feiran had coordinated with adopters to hand over the kittens on Sunday, which meant they needed to take the kittens home on Saturday evening. Lin Feiran, hesitant about imposing on Gu Kaifeng's family space, was mulling over how to suggest hosting the kittens at his place for the weekend. Before he could voice his concern, Gu Kaifeng, ever so perceptive, proposed, "Why don't we spend the weekend at your place? It'll be easier to manage the kittens there."

"Sounds good," Lin Feiran agreed immediately, "But we need

to do some cleaning first. My house has been empty for a while."

"No worries," Gu Kaifeng reassured, his hand gently stroking the heads of the kittens nestled in their box. "I'll take care of the cleaning. Plus, bringing them to my place would only invite unnecessary lectures about staying focused on my studies."

With a plan in place, Lin Feiran fetched his seldomly used house key, and together with Gu Kaifeng and the kittens, headed home.

Lin Feiran's apartment was located in a high-rise condominium complex along the river. The place was tidy, thanks to a cleaning service his father had arranged before leaving for work abroad. However, a layer of dust had settled, and the air felt stale. As they entered, Lin Feiran offered Gu Kaifeng a pair of slippers and immediately opened the balcony doors, welcoming the river's breeze into the apartment. Refreshed by the cool air, the living room seemed to breathe a sigh of relief, its previously stale atmosphere now infused with a crisp, aquatic freshness.

Leaning on the balcony railing and taking a deep breath, Lin Feiran felt rejuvenated as fresh air filled his lungs. His eyes lit up with excitement as he beckoned Gu Kaifeng over. "Come over here, you've got to see this."

Gu Kaifeng carefully set down the box of kittens, slipped on his slippers, and joined Lin Feiran on the balcony.

"Check out the river," Lin Feiran gestured towards the scenic view, "It's stunning, don't you think?"

Gu Kaifeng's attention followed Lin Feiran's direction, and just at that moment, the city lights began to twinkle, illuminating the river. It reflected the evening's deep blues, turning it into

a shimmering dark jewel under the night sky. The lamps along the riverside and the sparkling lights from the buildings painted vibrant streaks across the water's surface. His gaze eventually shifted back to Lin Feiran, whose eyes were alight, mirroring the kaleidoscope of lights enveloping them.

"Careful, don't let the cold get to you," Gu Kaifeng's concern broke the silence.

Lin Feiran shrugged, a small concession to the cold. "Yeah, let's go back in."

"Just a second," Gu Kaifeng insisted, his arms wrapping around Lin Feiran, sharing his warmth in the crisp air. He whispered, his breath soft and warm against Lin Feiran's ear, "Better?"

"Stop... don't breathe on me." Lin Feiran protested, feeling a warm breath tickle his ear and send shivers down his spine. Instinctively, he tilted his head away from Gu Kaifeng, seeking space. But this only exposed more of his slender neck, which Gu Kaifeng seized as an invitation, teasing with a quick bite.

Lin Feiran's first impulse was to chuck Gu Kaifeng off the balcony. Right now!

"Enough already!" he exclaimed, reaching to cover Gu Kaifeng's mouth. But Gu Kaifeng was quick to retaliate, playfully licking Lin Feiran's palm.

Shocked, Lin Feiran withdrew his hand as if burned, stuffing it into his pocket and storming back inside, leaving a laughing Gu Kaifeng behind.

*Gu Kaifeng, that absolute hooligan! He always manages to one-up me.*

Gu Kaifeng followed. "Which room's the bedroom? I'll start cleaning," he offered, shutting the balcony door behind him and

rolling up his sleeves.

"That one." Lin Feiran pointed towards his bedroom. "Don't worry, I've got it. Just needs a fresh set of bedding and a quick dusting."

Eyeing the living space, Gu Kaifeng moved a stool under the piano and insisted, "Let me handle it."

"But..." Lin Feiran hesitated.

*Since when does a host invite someone over and then put them to work?*

With a playful flick on Lin Feiran's nose, Gu Kaifeng teased, "Can my esteemed little master even manage household chores?"

Lin Feiran bluffed, "Of course I can. I'm perfectly capable, thank you."

Gu Kaifeng chuckled, recalling a memory. "Remember how you struggled with the duvet cover for ten minutes while swearing under your breath?"

That happened just two weeks after Lin Feiran started boarding school.

Lin Feiran paused. "...You were awake?"

"I tried to sleep but couldn't. Ended up listening to your battle with the duvet cover above me," Gu Kaifeng admitted, his voice had a hint of fake frustration.

Lin Feiran's cheeks tinged pink as he griped, "I finally wrestled the duvet into its cover, right? But when I went to smooth it out, it turned out I got the long side and the short side mixed up. Seriously, it made me so mad I wanted to punch something."

"Let me take over those tasks. Hands as lovely as yours shouldn't be sullied by such menial work," Gu Kaifeng stated

earnestly, eager to show his devotion. He grabbed a clean paper towel and began wiping the piano bench clean, even adding a warm smile. "You should just focus on enchanting me with your music."

Touched, Lin Feiran settled at the piano, offering sweetly, "What would you like to hear, or should I just play what I feel?"

Indeed, it seemed that Young Master Lin, with his usual pride, could be easily swayed... all for the comfort of a freshly made bed.

"Play anything. I'm all ears," Gu Kaifeng replied, content to just listen.

Lin Feiran nodded, but after playing a few notes, he paused, fetched a nail clipper from a drawer near the TV, and announced, "I need to trim my nails first." The optimal length of one's fingernails is crucial for piano playing; too long and they might cause the fingers to slip off the keys, breaking the melody's continuity.

Gu Kaifeng took the nail clipper from Lin Feiran, gently nudged his shoulder to guide him back to the stool, and knelt down, cradling Lin Feiran's hand in his. "Allow me," he whispered.

*I'm holding his hand now. I'm so clever!* A spark of mischief glinted in Gu Kaifeng's eyes.

As Gu Kaifeng knelt before him and held his hands, Lin Feiran couldn't help but feel as if he was in the midst of a marriage proposal scene. "I can manage on my own..." Lin Feiran began, his protest silenced by a tender kiss to his fingertip that sent his thoughts scattering.

"Don't move, or I might accidentally cut you," Gu Kaifeng

warned, gently securing Lin Feiran's finger in place. With a look filled with care, he started to meticulously trim Lin Feiran's nails.

Lin Feiran fidgeted, feeling oddly out of place, his eyes roving around the room to avoid looking at Gu Kaifeng. The point where their hands connected seemed to pulse with an unseen energy.

*I'm only enduring this because of my exceptional patience, no extra thoughts.* Lin Feiran reassured himself, striving to steady his fluttering heart.

Once finished, Gu Kaifeng adjusted his kneeling position and sighed deeply, "I think I'm going insane."

Lin Feiran couldn't resist a sarcastic retort, "You're just now realizing that, Gu Kai-Crazy."[12]

Gu Kaifeng, with a playful grin and a heavy breath, said, "Your hands alone are enough to give me a hard-on."

Lin Feiran was momentarily speechless.

Gu Kaifeng's expression was one of shallow solemnity, "One day, you'll be the death of me in bed, sucking me dry until I'm but a shell of a man."

"What bed! In your dreams!" Lin Feiran retorted, snatching his hand back as Gu Kaifeng set aside the nail clipper. He gave Gu Kaifeng a disapproving look and hoped it would elicit some guilt from him.

"Shall I take a look at your toes next?" Gu Kaifeng quipped,

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12 Gu Kai-Crazy: "Crazy" is a play on words since " 疯 " means crazy and shares the same pronunciation as "feng( 风 )," the last character in Gu Kai-feng's name, blending his name with his unpredictable antics.

playfully grasping Lin Feiran's foot and pretending to peel off his sock as though he intended to extend his pampering.

Startled, Lin Feiran tried to retract his foot, protesting, "I'll take care of that myself!"

Seeing Lin Feiran acting like a skittish deer, Gu Kaifeng's laughter echoed through the room. He leaned in, giving Lin Feiran's ankle a quick peck before letting it go. "Alright, your hubby will take care of the chores now."

Lin Feiran, much like protecting his virginity, guarded his feet and urged Gu Kaifeng, "Yes, please do. Hurry!"

*As long as I'm spared!*

Satisfied with his role as the doting "hubby," Gu Kaifeng rolled up his sleeves and got to work on tidying the bedroom.

As the Sunday sun dipped into the late afternoon sky, each kitten found a new, loving home. The warmth in the eyes of the new owners comforted Lin Feiran as he diligently noted their contact information, mentioning that he might contact them and drop by occasionally to see how the kittens were faring—an idea that was met with wholehearted approval.

Watching the last kitten being carried away, its new owner's silhouette glowing in the sunset, Lin Feiran was caught in a moment of reflection. Gu Kaifeng, noticing his quiet mood, gave his shoulder a reassuring squeeze. "Feeling sentimental? How about we adopt our own little kitten after we graduate?"

Lin Feiran shook his head, his gaze fixed on the distance before snapping back to the present. Blinking away the sentiment, he said, "It's not that. I just can't help but wonder... if we hadn't found them that day, what would have become of them?"

In recent times, Lin Feiran had been earnestly confronting his ability to see ghosts, scheduling short, deliberate encounters to gradually acclimate himself. But the sight of ghosts still sent a shiver down his spine, and deep down, he knew he still needed years to adapt to it. However, he was coming to terms with this part of his life, his initial dread slowly giving way to a cautious acceptance. For now, he could handle the sight of ghosts, provided they kept their distance and left him alone.

*At least I'm making progress. I'm not the guy who used to be petrified of ghosts anymore!* Lin Feiran thought, balling his hands into fists as a wave of encouragement washed over him.

*On the bright side, I rescued those four kittens. Seeing ghosts wasn't an entirely dark curse after all!*

# Chapter 11

Before they knew it, the midterm exams arrived. Spanning two days, it was made up of four subjects: Language Arts, mathematics, English, and comprehensive science. The seating was determined by student IDs, placing Gu Kaifeng towards the front and Lin Feiran, having joined the school more recently, at the back. This arrangement made any physical contact or exchange of items impossible during the exams. The worst part about this arrangement was that they wouldn't even share the same exam hall.

Each test spanned two and a half hours. Lin Feiran initially toyed with the idea of borrowing Gu Kaifeng's stationeries to harness some yang energy. However, such items held minimal energy and would require swiping a handful to last the duration of just one exam. It was a risky and nearly impossible feat without drawing attention. After all, Gu Kaifeng was no fool.

So, on exam morning, Lin Feiran spotted his opportunity when Gu Kaifeng went to freshen up. The crafty Lin-little

sneaky rice cake made his move. He knew the school issued two identical sets of autumn uniforms for convenience, and Gu Kaifeng's freshly laundered set from two days ago was just waiting in his wardrobe!

A quick search led Lin Feiran to the clean uniform. With a sly manoeuvre, he unfolded it and exchanged it with the one rich in yang energy which Gu Kaifeng had worn the day before and left on a chair the previous night. Then he sneakily stashed Gu Kaifeng's worn school uniform in his own wardrobe.

*What a genius I am!*

Taking Gu Kaifeng's yang energy infused uniform, Lin Feiran had effectively armed himself for the exams. The jacket, trousers, white shirt, and sweater vest created a four-piece set, each piece earmarked for one of the four exams. This wardrobe swap ensured he'd have enough yang energy to ward off ghosts for two hours each time, aligning perfectly with his exam schedule.

Pleased with his ingenuity, Lin Feiran opted for a "flavoured" white shirt from the loot. But as he buttoned up, Gu Kaifeng, now refreshed from his morning routine, breezed back into the dorm and caught Lin Feiran in the act.

Caught off guard and with a flush of guilt, Lin Feiran hastily slammed the wardrobe door shut. He rushed to tuck in the excessively long shirt that dangled untidily over his trousers. Midway through zipping up, he was cornered against the wardrobe door by Gu Kaifeng.

"Good morning!" Lin Feiran exclaimed, his eyes widening, darting about in alarm.

With a low chuckle, Gu Kaifeng teased, "And what mischief are you up to so early, hmm?"

"Just... getting ready. Nothing else," Lin Feiran mumbled, zipping up his trousers in haste. With the sleeves of the shirt obviously too long, he awkwardly hid his hands behind him, much like the stance of a child caught in a misdeed. He tried his best to remain calm and maintain an air of cool detachment under Gu Kaifeng's scrutinizing gaze.

"If you're trying to charm me with that cute act, I just might have to kiss you," Gu Kaifeng said huskily, half-serious with his teeth bared in a playful threat.

"I'm not acting cute!" Lin Feiran protested against the wrongful accusation.

Gu Kaifeng's eyes narrowed, not entirely convinced, which made Lin Feiran stand his ground more decisively. "I'm naturally this cute, okay?" *How dare he blame me for this?*

Gu Kaifeng, unable to resist, reached for Lin Feiran's chin, leaning in as though to end their playful exchange with a kiss. However, in a gentle act of self-control and being mindful of how the lingering effects of such a kiss could disrupt Lin Feiran's focus during the exam, he veered off at the last moment, leaving a soft kiss at the corner of Lin Feiran's mouth instead.

Lin Feiran's cheeks blazed so hot one could fry eggs on them and his brain short-circuited, launching the classical article he'd painfully memorized the night before into the void.

Yeah, he had pulled an all-nighter burning that into his mind because the undisputed scholarly genius of the year had sworn this piece would be chosen for the fill-in-the-blank questions.

"We'll stop here for today. I'll hold off on this until after the exams are done." Gu Kaifeng declared ominously.

Lin Feiran couldn't help but sulk while on the verge of tears.

*My hard-earned memorization of that classical article from last night! All I can recall now is the first line!*

*Guess the school's rule against dating isn't so unreasonable after all!*

Thanks to the uniform imbued with yang energy, Lin Feiran navigated through his midterm exams without any ghostly interruptions. This confirmed his guess that worn clothes indeed held a significant amount of yang energy.

However, the lingering scent of Gu Kaifeng on the fabric had an unintended consequence, frequently leaving Lin Feiran with the strange sensation of being held in his embrace, which caused him to blush unexpectedly during the exams. These spontaneous reactions, seemingly without reason, looked suspicious and caught the invigilators' attention, making him the subject of increased scrutiny over the two days.

Students were given a much-needed break before the evening study session after the midterm exam. When the last bell for the English exam sounded, marking the end of the midterms, Lin Feiran, still wrapped in Gu Kaifeng's jacket, made a beeline for the dormitory. Eager to swap back into his own jacket, he intended to swiftly and discreetly return Gu Kaifeng's jacket to its rightful place in Gu Kaifeng's wardrobe.

However, as Lin Feiran walked with his head down and deep in thought, he was abruptly stopped by a tap on his shoulder. Turning around, he was met with the sight of Gu Kaifeng standing there, one hand nonchalantly tucked into his pocket, exuding effortless charm. Sporting a playful smile, Gu Kaifeng inquired, "What's the hurry? You're not gonna wait for me?"

Lin Feiran remained silent.

*What you fear will always find a way to appear!*

Gu Kaifeng's scrutinizing gaze swept over him, sharp and probing. A slight furrow appeared between his brows as he observed, "You've been off these past few days."

Lin Feiran swallowed nervously under the weight of that gaze.

The realization suddenly struck Gu Kaifeng. "Isn't that jacket a bit too big on you?"

"It's just your imagination. I really should get going back to the dorm..." Lin Feiran tried to deflect, turning on his heel to leave.

"Hold on," Gu Kaifeng's voice was a stern command, his grip firm on Lin Feiran's wrist, drawing him back with a force that left Lin Feiran stumbling into his arms. Gu Kaifeng's left hand anchored Lin Feiran in place while his right ventured to the jacket's collar to check the label. "XL? You're an L, aren't you?" His tone deepened, a shadow crossing his features.

Lin Feiran, cornered, tried a desperate retort. "Can't I have a growth spurt?" *Any magic out there that can make me instantly grow ten centimetres taller?*

Gu Kaifeng's reply was curt. "Nope."

The tension spiked as Lin Feiran's anxiety surged.

"This is mine, right?" Gu Kaifeng pressed.

Lin Feiran's evasion faltered. "No," he muttered, avoiding eye contact.

Gu Kaifeng leaned in to sniff Lin Feiran's shoulder as he remarked, half in accusation, half in jest, "It carries the scent of my laundry detergent."

Cornered and out of excuses, Lin Feiran stopped resisting and slumped, transforming into his surrendered state as a deflated little sticky rice cake, quietly hanging his head.

A mischievous spark danced in Gu Kaifeng's eyes as he teasingly bit his lower lip, leaning in closer to whisper in Lin Feiran's ear with a playful tone. "A little pervert, aren't you?"

Lin Feiran, indignant and at a loss for words, felt that the situation couldn't have been more ironic.

*Being called a pervert by the king of it!* Lin Feiran had half a mind to jump into a river just to wash away this stain on his reputation!

Gu Kaifeng's breath hitched, his voice rough in anticipation. "Do you like me so much that wearing my clothes gets you excited?"

The question sent Lin Feiran's cheeks ablaze. Despite his efforts to wriggle free, Gu Kaifeng's grip on his wrist was unyielding. The curious and somewhat amused looks from passing students only added to his embarrassment. With a huff of annoyance, Gu Kaifeng quickly manoeuvred them into the nearest men's toilet for privacy. He hastened Lin Feiran into a stall and swiftly locked the door behind them. He then pinned Lin Feiran against his chest with a firm grip even as Lin Feiran desperately tried to break free. In the next moment, he leaned in closely and planted a deep, inescapable kiss on Lin Feiran.

Since it was after the midterm exams with no academic distractions to hold him back, Gu Kaifeng surrendered to his feelings. He wrapped Lin Feiran in a tight embrace, sealing their lips in a desire-filled kiss. He explored Lin Feiran's mouth from lips to tongue with an intensity that left them both breathless.

Were it not for the cold air in the toilet stall, Gu Kaifeng would have liked to strip the little-clothing-thief naked and shower him with kisses from head to toe.

Overwhelmed, Lin Feiran initially resisted, pushing against Gu Kaifeng in an attempt to pull away. However, the intensity of their kiss quickly melted his resolve, leaving him unable to resist Gu Kaifeng's passionate embrace. Held tightly by Gu Kaifeng, Lin Feiran felt himself melting away, as if his very essence was dissolving into a pool of boiling water within the confines of his skin and bones. His thoughts and senses mingled in it, floating and fluttering aimlessly.

"Mmm..." Lin Feiran involuntarily let out a soft, enticing moan. He felt as though the ground beneath him was swaying, and instinctively tightened his grip on Gu Kaifeng's arm for stability. However, as he regained some senses, he realized it was an illusion. The ground was steady; it was his heart that was pounding in a tumultuous rhythm, making his legs tremble with each thud against his chest.

The kiss seemed to stretch on endlessly. Lin Feiran only realized it had ended when he finally snapped back to reality. Their bodies were still pressed close together, and Lin Feiran could feel something hard pressing against him. His was also...

"Fuck!" Gu Kaifeng whispered harshly, his voice laced with excitement. Leaning in closer, his breath tickled Lin Feiran's ear as he whispered teasingly, "Feeling a rush?"

Lin Feiran, caught off guard, stuttered, "Wh-what's this..." His body tensed, unsure of how to react.

*He must've drugged me with an aphrodisiac!*

"When will you admit you like me?" Gu Kaifeng asked in a

low voice. His hand slid under the hem of Lin Feiran's uniform jacket, fingers nimbly nudged aside the sweater and shirt to reach the smooth, soft skin at Lin Feiran's waist. After a moment of kneading, he impatiently pushed past the belt and ventured lower.

Feeling the encroaching hand, Lin Feiran snapped back to reality, his reaction swift. "Stop!" he commanded in a low growl as he firmly caught Gu Kaifeng's hand.

Gu Kaifeng kept his hand in place and didn't push further, letting it rest precariously on Lin Feiran's lower abdomen before brushing a tender kiss across Lin Feiran's lips. His gaze drifted down while the gleam of his tongue briefly darted between his teeth, a mischievous sparkle in his eyes as he teasingly retracted his tongue. "How about I use this to make you feel good?" He murmured suggestively, trying to coax Lin Feiran.

The urinal area was alive with the sounds of chatter and the occasional flush, oblivious to the love drama unfolding in the stall. Fresh out of their exams, students were too busy buzzing about their performance to take notice.

"Cut it out! You, don't you dare!" Take advantage of the noise outside, Lin Feiran's voice grew louder, edged with panic and desperation.

Gu Kaifeng licked his lips and pressed closer. "But I really want to try, honey," he said, a playful grin spreading across his face when he saw Lin Feiran's adamant shake of his head. Shifting tactics, he softened, nuzzling into Lin Feiran's neck with a gentle purr. "I'm starving. Can't you give me some milk?"

"You..." Lin Feiran found himself at a loss, utterly disarmed by Gu Kaifeng's playful charm. The warmth of his breath and

the tickle of hair against his neck sent a rush of sensations through him, leaving his thoughts scattered and his heart racing. He almost agreed to give into the whirlwind of desire sweeping through him. It didn't help that his penis was so hard it hurt.

Yet, as quickly as the warmth spread, a cold wave of realization crashed over him. They were both men, a fact that sent a pang of guilt and confusion through Lin Feiran's heart.

Lin Feiran cupped Gu Kaifeng's face, compelling their eyes to lock with a seriousness that had no room for argument. "Gu Kaifeng, come back to your senses."

"I am awake," Gu Kaifeng countered, his gaze intense, barely holding back a storm of longing and frustration. "Ranran, are you trying to torment me?"

"With so many people outside, where is your sense of shame?" Lin Feiran rebuked softly, his voice a mix of worry and admonition.

Undeterred, Gu Kaifeng offered a cunning solution. "Let's head back to our dorm then."

*Why does he always think with his dick?!* Lin Feiran slammed his fist against the wall, using his shout to hide his unease, "I don't want to! Not here, not anywhere!"

Gu Kaifeng's response was silent, his lips pursing as he took a deep breath to steady himself, reality finally pulling him to his senses.

Lin Feiran stiffened like a wary cat with its hackles raised.

With a sigh, Gu Kaifeng pulled Lin Feiran close, embraced him tightly and then let go, whispering, "Sorry, got ahead of myself again. Please don't be angry."

Overwhelmed and struggling to articulate his inner turmoil,

Lin Feiran was practically vibrating with frustration.

After a brief silence, Gu Kaifeng's voice broke through, low and strained. "If moving this fast isn't what you want, maybe I can dial back the teasing? It's hard for me to hold back my self-control. I worry about getting carried away, and not being able to stop myself. If I were to force you in bed, your slender build wouldn't offer much resistance."

Lin Feiran wiped his face, lips quivering. He was about to say something but stopped short. After a moment of frustration, he finally choked out a resigned, "...Okay."

"I'll head out first," Gu Kaifeng suggested and gave a soft pinch to Lin Feiran's cheek before stepping out.

Moments later, Lin Feiran emerged from the stall, feigning calmness and carefully avoiding eye contact. As he had hoped, he passed unnoticed. At the sink, he washed his hands before splashing his overheated face with cold water. After freshening up, he stepped out of the toilet to find Gu Kaifeng casually leaning against the window on the other side of the corridor with a few strands damp hair obscuring his face, indicating he too had sought respite with a splash.

"Where to?" Gu Kaifeng asked.

"Anywhere," Lin Feiran replied. "Back to the dorm?"

"Let's go." Gu Kaifeng nodded, and they set off.

Lin Feiran walked ahead, with Gu Kaifeng trailing a few steps behind. Lin Feiran couldn't ignore the weight of Gu Kaifeng's breaths—heavy and more laboured than usual, rapid yet somehow restrained. Lin Feiran was suddenly hit with the realization that he felt like prey being pursued by a wolf. But not just any wolf, a feral one, on the brink of lunging to devour him from

head to toe!

On their way to the dormitory, they ran into a group of boys led by Wang Zhuo, already dressed in his sportswear and casually spinning a basketball on one finger. He spotted them and waved with a grin, "Hey, Brother Kai! Saozi!"[13]

Lin Feiran was momentarily lost for words.

Gu Kaifeng responded with a nod as if nothing could be more natural. "Heading to the court?"

"Join us," Wang Zhuo glanced at his watch. "An hour of play, then it's dinner time, perfect before evening study. What do you say?"

"What do you think?" Gu Kaifeng turned to Lin Feiran.

Wang Zhuo couldn't resist teasing, "Wow, look at you! Totally giving off those 'settled down' vibes."

"Knock it off," Gu Kaifeng laughed, playfully jabbing at Wang Zhuo, "I was asking Feiran. He's got a mean shot—even bested me a few times."

Wang Zhuo clasped his hands towards Lin Feiran, "My apologies, sir! How come you've never showcased your skills before?"

Before Lin Feiran could respond, Gu Kaifeng jumped in, "Oh, you're just not on his level. My Ranran finds it boring to crush you guys."

One could say that Gu Kaifeng was an extremely devoted fan of Ranran!

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13 Saozi: a term used to address a sister-in-law, often used as an endearing term for a good friend's girlfriend when the friend is older.

"No, it's not like that." Lin Feiran felt a little puffed up by Gu Kaifeng's sudden barrage of praises and his mood considerably lightened, though he still lacked any real interest in playing basketball. He declined with a wave, "I appreciate the offer, but I haven't played seriously in quite some time. Go on without me."

"How about you watch me then?" Gu Kaifeng lightly tugged on Lin Feiran's pinky in front of the other boys, smirking, "I might not shoot as accurately as you, but I'm the king of rebounds."

He was clearly eager to show off to his crush!

Wang Zhuo cheered and howled, prompting the other boys, assuming Gu Kaifeng was merely jesting, to join in the laughter.

Overwhelmed by the noise, Lin Feiran flushed and quickly tucked his hand in his pocket, nodding awkwardly. "All right."

"Great, I'll go change in the dorm. See you on the court," Gu Kaifeng cheerfully waved to the group before quickening his pace to return to the dorm with Lin Feiran.

Once there, Lin Feiran swiftly exchanged Gu Kaifeng's uniform jacket for his own while Gu Kaifeng changed into his sportswear. After Lin Feiran grabbed two bottles of mineral water from under the desk, they headed out to the court to meet the group. Gu Kaifeng joined the game, leaving Lin Feiran to find a comfortable spot on the sidelines, his attention divided between the basketball game and his phone.

Engrossed in his phone, Lin Feiran felt an unexpected chill snake through him about half an hour in, and it rapidly spread throughout his body. His brows drew together in concern; something wasn't right. He remembered last time, Gu Kaifeng's

kiss had quelled his Yin-yang Eye for a good hour, yet now, barely forty minutes had passed...

But he realized that drawing conclusions based on just two kisses was hardly scientific.

His gaze swept across the field, noting the sparse presence of ghosts. The sun hadn't yet set, and the ghosts were rather inactive in the gentle light of the setting sun with some still fast asleep. This observation reassured Lin Feiran; the atmosphere, while not comfortable, didn't feel threatening. Deciding the setting was safe enough for now, Lin Feiran chose to stay put, though his caution had him occasionally scanning the surroundings.

Suddenly, a basketball veered off the court and rolled to a halt a few metres in front of him. As he went to pick it up, a small, spectral figure materialized beside the ball—the little ghost girl he remembered from the office who had clung to Ms Zheng's leg. She was about seven years old and dressed in a skirt. She dashed to the basketball with delight, tenderly touching it while tears of blood filled her longing eyes. However, the moment her hand touched the ball, Gu Kaifeng arrived to pick it up. Enveloped by a strong aura of yang energy, he inadvertently made the little ghost girl step back in fear. With wide, sorrowful eyes, she watched as Gu Kaifeng walked away with the ball.

"Doesn't your man look cool out there?" Gu Kaifeng teased, pausing a few steps away with a roguish grin, basketball under one arm.

Lin Feiran couldn't help but roll his eyes, a silent retort to the cheeky remark.

"I'll take that as a yes." Gu Kaifeng chuckled, sending an air

kiss Lin Feiran's way before sprinting back to the game.

Watching Gu Kaifeng re-join the others, Lin Feiran was struck by a nagging sense of unease he couldn't immediately pinpoint. His gaze shifted from the lively figures of Wang Zhuo and the rest back to Gu Kaifeng and came to a startling realization. With his Yin-yang Eye ability activated, Lin Feiran could recognise Gu Kaifeng solely by his strong yang energy even without looking at his appearance. However, the vibrant aura of yang energy that typically made Gu Kaifeng stand out, even in a bustling crowd, had noticeably dimmed. Although still brighter than that of his peers, its reduced intensity was unmistakable.

Rubbing his eyes in bewilderment, Lin Feiran questioned his own perception. Could he have been mistaken? Yet, when he looked again, the energy around Gu Kaifeng remained noticeably weaker.

*Holy crap, did I somehow drain it?* Lin Feiran wondered, concerned at the thought of being a yang energy "parasite."

*Or... Could it be the aftereffects of Gu Kaifeng's high fever, leaving him physically drained?*

While Lin Feiran watched the game, a soft sigh caught his attention. Turning, he noticed the little ghost girl sitting nearby, her knees pulled tight to her chest. She looked longingly at the boys playing, her desire to join in palpable even in her silence.

The sight of her, sad and wiping away the blood that trickled from her eyes, tugged at Lin Feiran's heart. With her thin and pale fingers, she began to trace shapes in the dirt, eventually forming a smiley face stained with blood. After sketching the smiley, the little girl ghost herself pulled a small smile as though comforting herself.

She must've be a good, sensible child while alive! But alas, she was still a ghost...

Lin Feiran was torn between watching Gu Kaifeng and the group's lively game and stealing glances at the ghost girl's solitary figure. His hands clenched and unclenched, slick with sweat, and his heart pounded so heavily that it caused a cold shiver to run down his spine. He struggled with the idea of talking to the little ghost girl.

At this moment, the girl, with her arms thin as reeds, hugged her knees and rested her head on her arms. She continued her solitary play—humming a nursery rhyme and clapping for herself, an incredibly lonely sight.

Gathering his courage, Lin Feiran decided to reach out. To avoid suspicion of talking to himself, he covered his mouth and pretended to be deep in thought. "Um... Hey, little one over there... Can you hear me?" His voice shook, betraying his nervousness.

Lin Feiran kept his gaze fixed on Gu Kaifeng while speaking. This was his first direct attempt to communicate with a human ghost, and it filled him with fear. His mind was flooded with scenes from horror films, haunted by the fear that she might suddenly reveal a more terrifying part of herself. The presence of Gu Kaifeng nearby provided him with a sliver of comfort.

Just then, Gu Kaifeng caught Lin Feiran staring. He responded with a playful smile and a theatrical air kiss.

Lin Feiran couldn't help but send a stern look back, which, given his soft and endearing features, instead of looking threatening, only made him seem more flirtatious.

The boys, led by Wang Zhuo, burst into playful jeers and

laughter!

Basking in the "flirtation" implied by Lin Feiran's gaze, Gu Kaifeng felt pleased yet pretended to be annoyed. "Really, can't you guys ever behave?" he quipped.

Wang Zhuo laughed heartily. "No need for excuses, we get it—it's just a bro kiss, right? Perfectly normal!" he declared, blowing an exaggerated kiss to another boy, He Hao. "Look here, He Hao, mwah!"

He Hao played along, pretending to catch the kiss and pressing it to his cheek before sending one back to Wang Zhuo with a theatrical "Mwah!"

Amid the lively banter, Lin Feiran felt a blush creep up his cheeks. He shifted his focus back to the little ghost girl, who was also watching the boys. She seemed puzzled by their antics, her eyebrows furrowed in confusion.

*Damn, doing this in front of a child? Even if she's dead, she's still here!* The absurdity of the situation momentarily distracted him from the fear of ghosts. He was able to turn his attention to the little ghost girl and gently said, "Hello, little one, don't mind them. They're just being silly."

The little ghost girl seemed to startle slightly at Lin Feiran's voice, yet she remained quiet, offering no response.

After a tense silence, Lin Feiran moistened his dry lips before trying once more, "Can you hear me, little one?"

The ghost girl offered him a surprised look but kept her silence.

With no aggressive moves from her and no change in her appearance to something more dreadful, Lin Feiran's nerves slightly settled, allowing his words to flow more naturally. "I can see

ghosts, like you, with what's called Yin-yang Eye. Could we talk, maybe?"

The little ghost girl blinked her blood-soaked eyes and edged back cautiously, maintaining her silence. *Mommy said not to talk to strangers, especially odd older boys and uncles!*

Lin Feiran paused, taken aback by her fear. He couldn't help but feel self-conscious. *Do I look like a bad guy?*

"Hey, I'm just trying to talk. Why are you backing away?" He couldn't help but sound a little frustrated.

In response to his slightly irritated tone, she retreated further, curling into herself and hugging her knees even tighter.

Realizing his approach might be too direct, Lin Feiran softened his tone. "I promise, I'm not here to scare you. There's no need to be afraid."

But as he spoke, he felt a twinge of irony. Isn't it usually the living who are afraid of ghosts?

*What right do you have, as a ghost who's more frightened than me? I should be the one who's more terrified here!*

His softer tone and handsome appearance momentarily halted her retreat. She buried her face in her arms, but she slowly turned towards Lin Feiran, peeking at him from under her arm through the corner of a blood-streaked eye, warily observing this suspicious yet attractive stranger. Such behaviour from a living child might be considered charming, but from a ghost girl, it was undeniably creepy.

Attempting to soothe both the little ghost girl and himself, Lin Feiran stuttered, "Don't be afraid, don't be afraid..."

After taking a moment to gather his courage, Lin Feiran shifted his gaze away from the little ghost girl to Gu Kaifeng,

drawing strength from his presence. He then whispered, "Do you know Ms Zheng?"

The little ghost girl's response was a silent nod, her demeanour shy and reserved, much like any living child who prefers to keep to themselves if it wasn't her deathly pale face.

"Could you be Ms Zheng's daughter?" Lin Feiran asked, piecing together what he knew of Ms Zheng's family. Ms Zheng appeared to be in her forties yet her son was only in second grade. It struck him as plausible that Ms Zheng could have had her son at a later time and might have experienced the pain of losing a child before.

At his question, the little girl paused before nodding once more, confirming his guess.

Lin Feiran always saw Ms Zheng in a good light, so seeing her lost daughter, he sighed deeply. Choosing his words carefully, he softly inquired, "So, did... was it an accident, or did you fall sick?"

The little ghost girl seemed reluctant to delve into the topic. She hesitated but eventually stretched out her pale, thin hand and held up two fingers, a silent but clear indication.

*Second option?* "So, you were ill," Lin Feiran confirmed softly, noting her nod.

Surprised at the ease of their communication, he found himself growing more comfortable with the conversation. "Is there something you wish to do? Maybe I can help."

The little ghost girl hesitated, her eyes dark as the deepest well, scanning Lin Feiran warily. She swept her gaze over him as if weighing his intentions. Despite his best efforts to reassure her, she seemed unconvinced and shook her head slowly before

rising to her feet. She stood up and brushed her skirt in a way that was more out of habit than necessity and darted away. Her frail, thin form passed through the wall and vanished in a blink of an eye.

Lin Feiran watched her go, unsurprised by her choice. He knew all too well the wariness children her age displayed towards strangers—his cousin was proof of that. It would've been surprising if she trusted him immediately.

As the echo of the basketball hitting the backboard filled the air, Lin Feiran's attention was momentarily drawn back to the game. He saw the ball being caught effortlessly by a pair of beautiful hands. As his eyes lingered on the basketball that the little ghost girl wished to touch, a plan began to take shape in his mind, fuelled by a growing sense of compassion for the girl who had died so young. The thought of her life, possibly spent in the hospital rather than in the joyful abandon of play, weighed heavily on him.

"Caught that three-pointer?" Gu Kaifeng boasted as he ran towards Lin Feiran with the basketball, his presence radiating vibrant yang energy. As he approached, he accidentally stepped over two ghosts sleeping on the ground. The contact with his powerful yang energy momentarily left their forms with searing holes in their abdomens. Awakened from their slumber, the ghosts wore expressions of shock and anger.

"I saw," Lin Feiran managed to say as he opened a bottle of mineral water. Offering it to Gu Kaifeng, he deliberately brushed his fingers against Gu Kaifeng's. The contact, charged with yang energy, helped him dispel the vision of the two complaining ghosts on the ground.

"A new one?" Gu Kaifeng remarked, wiping his sweat and eyeing the bottle.

He didn't drink from the bottle Lin Feiran offered but instead tightened the cap and handed it back. Bending down, he picked up the half-filled bottle Lin Feiran had left on the ground, took several hefty gulps directly from the spot Lin Feiran had drank from and wiped his mouth. Under Lin Feiran's complicated gaze, Gu Kaifeng grinned and exclaimed, "This one's got a sweeter taste."

Lin Feiran was left speechless.

*If Gu Kaifeng were to ever meet his end, it would surely be because he's gone too far with his relentless teasing!*

After their evening study session, Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng returned to their dorm by 8:30 p.m. Lin Feiran pulled out his grandpa's old notebook from a desk drawer and planned to revisit the rituals of offering items to ghosts. Meanwhile, Gu Kaifeng, pretending to focus on a workbook, soon broke the silence with a gentle nudge, "Honey, how was your exam?"

"Pretty good." Lin Feiran perked up at the topic of midterms, his eyes sparkling in an instant. "Destroyed those tough math and physics problems. I think I even nailed my essay. I memorized loads of universal allusions for argumentative essays and applied three of them."

"Think you'll climb the ranks this time?" Gu Kaifeng asked, feigning nonchalance.

Grinning, Lin Feiran rubbed his nose and confidently gloated, "Catching up to you doesn't seem too far-fetched now."

Gu Kaifeng's laughter followed immediately as if waiting for

it. "And if you don't catch up? What's our wager?"

Lin Feiran's eye roll was just as quick. "Let's bet but skip the 'loser kisses the winner' bit."

"Tsk, getting tougher to sway, huh, Ranran?" Gu Kaifeng teased, noting Lin Feiran's quick-witted reply.

Snickering, Lin Feiran retorted, "I knew what you were up to."

"Sure, you won't have to kiss me if you lose." Gu Kaifeng said before adopting a more serious tone. He caught Lin Feiran's dangling right hand, and intertwined their fingers. "How about this: if you don't outdo me, you'll make be official with me. Be my boyfriend for real."

Lin Feiran paused and expressed his surprise. "So, you did know that I wasn't your boyfriend?"

With an aggrieved look, Gu Kaifeng replied, "Of course I knew. You never said yes."

Lin Feiran, momentarily speechless, finally found his voice. "Then all this time, why have you been so..."

Gu Kaifeng, wearing a teasing smile, answered, "You know, our politics class said: Our policy is to let some people and some areas fall in love first, and then use that to help other regions and other people to gradually achieve mutual love."

Feeling dizzy and quite exasperated with this awful twist of their textbook's words, Lin Feiran leaned on the table and slapped his forehead with a hand. "Your political science is quite sharp, huh? Why didn't you opt for humanities?"

"Wouldn't have been in your class if I had," Gu Kaifeng replied nonchalantly.

"I'm not taking the bait, drop it." Lin Feiran dismissed him

and returned to his grandpa's notebook.

Realizing that Gu Kaifeng's hand was still intertwined with his, Lin Feiran gently attempted to pull away, only to be met with Gu Kaifeng's stubborn resistance. As Lin Feiran made another attempt to free himself, Gu Kaifeng continued to hold his grip and leaned in closer, playfully rubbing his fingers as a sly distraction. "What's so captivating, Ranran?"

"It's...something from my grandpa," Lin Feiran began, but then a thought struck him. Realizing this could be the perfect clue for Gu Kaifeng to uncover the truth on his own, he quickly slid the notebook towards Gu Kaifeng, urging, "Have a look."

Gu Kaifeng scanned the notebook and then turned to Lin Feiran, a puzzled smile on his face. "Isn't this blank? What am I supposed to see here?"

Lin Feiran glanced down at the notebook, staring at the pages filled with dark blue writing. "Empty?" He swallowed hard, his voice weak, and his expression was a mixture of disbelief and concern.

Gu Kaifeng chuckled and gave the notebook another look, his eyes comically wide. "Looks completely empty to me," he declared with certainty.

Lin Feiran's anxiety spiked, his voice faltering. "It's supposed to have..." Again, the words catch in his throat.

"Have what?" Gu Kaifeng asked as he picked up the notebook, turned a page, and examined it closely under the light. He squinted as if trying to decipher the page with the intensity of his gaze. After a moment, he sighed and ruffled Lin Feiran's hair affectionately. Gu Kaifeng asked with amused exasperation in his voice, "Are you messing with me, babe?"

Staring at the words in the notebook that perhaps only he could see, Lin Feiran bit his lip in silence. A sense of cold helplessness crept up his spine, making his back ache. This moment highlighted a painful truth: he was alone in his experiences. He could not seek help from others, no matter how eerie or horrific the situation. Even the ability to express his feelings was impossible. Shifting uncomfortably, Lin Feiran tried to push these negative thoughts away, muttering, "Forget it, I was just joking."

Gu Kaifeng's gaze lingered on Lin Feiran, their hands still tightly clasped. With his free hand, he gently turned Lin Feiran's face towards him. His eyebrows furrowed slightly, "What's really going on? Are you keeping something from me?"

*I am not hiding anything. I'm just not allowed to explain.* Lin Feiran rolled his eyes, adopted a casual demeanour and deflected. "Honestly, it's nothing."

Gu Kaifeng wasn't buying it. His intuition told him there was more to this. "I know you too well. Has someone been giving you trouble or what?"

Lin Feiran shot Gu Kaifeng a deadpan look, raising the hand Gu Kaifeng had forcibly intertwined with his own. "Who could possibly trouble me except you?"

Gu Kaifeng's smirk held a trace of pride. "Complaints about your man already? Remember, you can always talk to me. I'm not just anyone."

*He's really into this husband role!*

Under Gu Kaifeng's persistent questioning, Lin Feiran offered an excuse, saying that looking at his grandpa's notebook had evoked a sense of loss in him. As a result, he found himself listening to Gu Kaifeng's "Chicken Soup for the Soul" stories in

an attempt to lift his spirits.

"Don't worry, he's up there looking out for you," Gu Kaifeng tried his best to comfort Lin Feiran, "Your happiness will always be his too."

The comfort felt strange coming from Gu Kaifeng. Though others would consider him handsome and aloof, his usual attitude towards Lin Feiran was a mix of suave looks and playful arrogance. This kind of behaviour was as unusual as a cult leader preaching the teachings of Confuscious!

Lin Feiran responded with a flat, "Oh."

*My grandpa's busy with my grandma back in our ancestral house, not hovering in the clouds!*

*The couple had always been wrapped up with each other, seldom extending their affection as far as their grandson.*

Gu Kaifeng, undeterred and still clasping Lin Feiran's hand, continued with his Chicken Soup. "Our grandpa..."

"He's my grandpa, not ours." Lin Feiran corrected sharply, puffing up with indignation.

Gu Kaifeng's lips curved into a reassuring smile as he sensed a shift in Lin Feiran's mood. Wrapping an arm around Lin Feiran, he offered a comforting hug. "How about I give you a comforting embrace? Just pretend I'm as comforting as your grandpa would have been."

Half-irritated and half-amused, Lin Feiran retorted, "Get off!"

However, Gu Kaifeng still tightened his arms around Lin Feiran, who was only half-heartedly trying to wriggle free. He gently kissed the top of Lin Feiran's head and whispered, "Whenever you're feeling down, just come to me. I am good at cheering

people up."

*You? Good at cheering people up?* Lin Feiran couldn't help but snort internally at the claim, though he let out a reluctant hum of acknowledgement.

"There, that's better." Gu Kaifeng then kissed Lin Feiran's hand that was in his.

Lin Feiran glanced at him, then at their intertwined hands and felt his cheeks warm up. "So how long do you plan on holding my hand?" he asked.

"Forever, if I could," Gu Kaifeng replied with earnest simplicity, catching Lin Feiran completely by surprise.

Before Lin Feiran could respond, Gu Kaifeng got up to rearrange their study table setup from side-to-side to back-to-back. Once they were seated again, he casually took Lin Ferian's left hand in his left hand. "This way, we can do our homework without letting go."

"You are... remarkably restless." Lin Feiran's heart skipped a beat. He felt his palm becoming clammy. His fair hand, beautiful and delicate, squirmed slightly in Gu Kaifeng's grasp, attempting to pull away.

*What exactly was going through Gu Kaifeng's mind every day?!*

With a playful click of his tongue, Gu Kaifeng teased, "Stay still, or I might fuck you."

Lin Feiran's face turned a deeper shade of red. "As if you'd dare."

"Try me," Gu Kaifeng challenged with a grin.

Lin Ferian couldn't utter a single word.

Gu Kaifeng muttered, "I'm already on edge. Don't tempt me to do what I am longing for."

Lin Feiran fell silent, resigning himself to letting Gu Kaifeng hold his hand as he turned his attention back to his grandpa's notebook. Meanwhile, Gu Kaifeng pulled out a workbook. He uncapped a pen with his mouth and began working on his homework.

The first page of the notebook meticulously detailed a ritual for making offerings to ghosts, a simple tradition. It called for an incense burner, three long joss sticks, each over 20 centimetres, to be lit in a calm, secluded spot. For a ghost whose roaming area was unknown, the individual conducting the ritual must inscribe the ghost's name and birthdate on yellow talisman paper and burn it as an offering. This step, however, could be bypassed if the ghost's roaming area was known since it could be ensured that the offerings were placed within its reach.

According to the instructions, the offerings were to be placed no more than three metres from the burning incense. The individual conducting the ritual was required to burn talisman paper while picturing the ghost's face. Once the incense had completely burned down, its remnants were to be discreetly disposed of or burned to ashes. They were never to be reused by the living to prevent attracting unwanted yin energy or fostering resentment.

The ritual was straightforward, and Lin Feiran had previously performed it at his grandpa's grave. He had the materials readily at hand after a recent funeral at his ancestral house. However, these items were nowhere to be found at his boarding school and students were only allowed to leave during weekends. Thus, Lin Feiran planned to obtain the necessary items on Sunday.

As Lin Feiran flipped through the notebook, he caught him-

self diving in deeper than he expected to. At first glance, he had only skimmed the contents, noting that most were exorcism spells—knowledge he never intended to use since he had no intention of following his grandpa's footsteps. Yet now, driven by curiosity, he was willing to explore all the things his grandpa had compiled. Perhaps he could use some of it against unforeseen supernatural encounters.

"What subject are you working on, babe?" Gu Kaifeng suddenly asked, his five slender fingers teasingly caressing Lin Feiran's hand.

"I'm... working on chemistry." Lin Feiran responded, hastily flipping open his chemistry homework. He was concerned that Gu Kaifeng might suspect he was losing his mind if he continued staring blankly at an empty notebook.

However, Gu Kaifeng appeared more captivated by the feel of Lin Feiran's hand in his than his homework. "Your hands are so soft." His thoughts flitted from one desire to the next as he remarked.

Lin Feiran issued a gentle warning by scratching Gu Kaifeng's palm with his short and completely harmless fingernails. "Holding is fine, but no caressing."

Gu Kaifeng chuckled softly, his voice playful. "You're giving in? Does this mean we'll move from 'caressing is fine, but no kissing' to 'kissing is fine, but no'..."

With gritted teeth, Lin Feiran countered, "How about we just fight instead?"

"Sure," Gu Kaifeng agreed, playfully patting Lin Feiran's hand against his cheek, complete with sound effects. "Pa! Pa, pa, pa!"

Faced with Gu Kaifeng's unrepentant teasing, Lin Feiran let

out an annoyed huff and turned his attention back to his grandpa's notebook.

Among the various exorcism spells, there were sections on Feng Shui[14] interpretations. Lin Feiran's interest didn't pique until he stumbled upon the name of a peculiar spell—"Sharing Yin". The strange-sounding name sharpened his focus on the text.

Firstly, the method for performing this spell was described as unsettling and taboo.

Secondly, the potential effects were described as nothing short of miraculous.

The "Sharing Yin" spell was tailored for individuals with a yin constitution, like Lin Feiran. It allowed such individuals to select someone without a yin constitution and establish a yin energy connection. Once established, the chosen person could also share the Yin-yang Eye ability and be able to connect or disconnect at will, effectively turning the Yin-yang Eye on or off. This was different from how people like Lin Feiran, who had a yin constitution, would be forced to live with the permanent ability to see ghosts.

*Could that actually work?!* Lin Feiran momentarily set aside the peculiar aspects of the spell's process. His thoughts centred on whether this spell could bridge the gap of understanding between them. Gu Kaifeng would finally see the truth behind his reliance on him and realize that it wasn't out of affection but rather to suppress his Yin-yang Eye with Gu Kaifeng's yang en-

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14 Fengshui: an ancient Chinese traditional practice that claims to use energy forces to harmonize individuals with their surrounding environment.

ergy.

However, Lin Feiran's budding enthusiasm disappeared in less than ten seconds upon noticing a cautionary note highlighted in red ink: "A yin energy connection, simply put, links two souls together. While easy to establish, it is difficult to sever. Therefore, the 'Sharing Yin' spell can only be cast once in a lifetime..."

Lin Feiran was stunned.

*No way! How could I possibly consider using a once-in-a-lifetime spell on him?!*

# Chapter 12

Lin-little sticky rice cake-Feiran followed Gu Kaifeng home once more over the weekend. Before they left school, Lin Feiran cleverly purchased some adorable hair accessories for Xiaxia from a nearby shop, which earned him even more affection from the little dog. Lin Feiran was delighted to see that his thoughtful gesture made Xiaxia cling to him whenever he was over for the weekend.

*Winning over this little dog's heart proved to be remarkably easy!*

During a rare break from his busy schedule, Gu Kaifeng's father offered them a ride back to school that Sunday afternoon. While in the car, Lin Feiran checked his shopping list on his phone before politely asking, "Uncle, could we make a stop at the wholesale market on the way? I need to pick up a few items."

"Of course," responded Mr Gu with a nod, to which Lin Feiran responded gratefully, "Thank you, Uncle."

Upon hearing Lin Feiran talk to others with a soft and polite

tone, Gu Kaifeng, ever the tease, couldn't resist the opportunity to flirt with Lin Feiran. He leaned in close, slipping his hand under the hem of Lin Feiran's clothes in a familiar manner and gave Lin Feiran's waist a sneaky squeeze.

Caught off guard, Lin Feiran let out an involuntary gasp, drawing a glance from Mr Gu in the rearview mirror. Gu Kaifeng quickly withdrew his hand and asked with feigned innocence. "What's wrong?"

*What a good actor!* Lin Feiran couldn't help but be impressed by Gu Kaifeng's acting skills.

Lin Feiran managed a smile through gritted teeth, steeling himself to play along with Gu Kaifeng's act. "Nothing, just remembered there's an unsolved math problem in my homework."

"Oh, then make sure you solve it when we get to school." Gu Kaifeng replied, acting seriously.

Lin Feiran gave him a sharp look, but his response was gentle, "Don't worry, I will."

Gu Kaifeng barely contained his laughter, mischievousness written all over his face.

Lin Feiran aimed to visit the city's largest wholesale market, known for its vast array of goods. From everyday items to more obscure finds, the market was a labyrinth of alleys and aisles, offering nearly everything under the sun except for cars and houses. Lin Feiran needed special items for an offering, so he preferred to keep a secret from Gu Kaifeng. To ensure he'd have a few ghost-free hours for his solo venture, Lin Feiran pulled out a bottle of mineral water from his backpack, unscrewed the cap, and offered it to Gu Kaifeng with feigned concern. "Thirsty? Want some water?"

Gu Kaifeng gave the newly opened bottle a lazy glance and replied, "Not yet."

After a brief pause, Lin Feiran picked up Gu Kaifeng's unspoken hint and took a big sip of water before offering it again. "Changed your mind yet?"

"Actually, I'm a bit thirsty now." Gu Kaifeng accepted the bottle and took a significant gulp. He was never one to pass up the opportunity for an indirect kiss.

Lin Feiran gave Gu-Rascal a knowing look, screwed the cap back on the bottle and stashed it in his bag. He felt a sense of reassurance knowing he had a bottle of water imbued with Gu Kaifeng's saliva.

Mr Gu, who had been quietly observing the exchange from the driver's seat, was puzzled.

*Why was Kaifeng so hesitant to even drink water recently?*

Getting yang energy through the "indirect kiss" was never Lin Feiran's first choice. But his subtle means of gathering yang energy in daily objects had become more complicated due to Gu Kaifeng's heightened awareness of his mysteriously disappearing personal items. With Lin Feiran as the prime suspect, Gu Kaifeng had once asked directly if he was the culprit. When confronted, Lin Feiran could only vehemently deny any wrongdoing.

"How could I?" Lin Feiran protested with feigned shock when challenged.

Half-jokingly, Gu Kaifeng pressed, "Really, you didn't?"

With a forceful denial, Lin Feiran assured, "Absolutely! Not!"

Gu Kaifeng locked eyes with Lin Feiran, who, unsurprisingly,

started to look away and avoided eye contact. Despite feeling cornered, Lin Feiran defended himself, "Do you really think I'm the type? Just because I borrowed your uniform once without asking when mine was all dirty doesn't mean I'd just take anything else without asking..."

Gu Kaifeng merely chuckled, a sound rich with unspoken thoughts. He stopped pursuing the matter further.

Nevertheless, Gu Kaifeng's suspicions only seemed to grow. From then on, Lin Feiran found it impossible to borrow even a pen or a notebook without it being noticed. Gu Kaifeng became a veritable detective, ensuring every misplaced item was accounted for. He would search relentlessly until the missing item was found. As a result, Lin Feiran's petty thefts dwindled, and Xiaxia became his main source of yang energy absorption on weekends.

Before returning to school today, Gu Kaifeng packed his belongings meticulously as usual. He described each item he put into his backpack with an exaggerated flourish, like a eunuch in a historical drama confiscating treasures, voice dripping with exaggeration at every word. "One, deep blue water pen. One, high school math textbook. One, black, gold-embossed chemistry notebook. One, seven-inch 2B pencil... Hang on, where is my fountain pen?"

Lin Feiran, unable to contain his frustration, silently took out the yang energy infused pen from his bag and returned it to the desk with a clenched jaw.

*Well, not getting away with anything now!*

Finding himself backed into a corner, Lin Feiran mentally psyched himself up to accept fate.

*If nothing else was up for grabs, I could still get saliva! In fact, it has a more potent effect...*

The car stopped near the entrance of the wholesale market. "Kaifeng, why don't you accompany Feiran? I'll find a parking spot and wait there," Mr Gu suggested.

"Sure." Gu Kaifeng was about to step out when Lin Feiran interjected, "Thank you, Uncle, but I'll manage on my own. I plan to browse around for a bit, and it might take a while. Perhaps you could take Kaifeng back to school first? I'll take a taxi later."

"Tsk," Gu Kaifeng tutted in disapproval, "Let me go with you."

"No, really, it's okay. You should head back to school," Lin Feiran insisted. He pulled his backpack over his shoulders confidently, the weight of the bottle of "holy water" fueling him.

*Recently, my little sticky rice cake hasn't been sticking around as much... Maybe it'll find someone else to stick to. I need to hurry up and eat it soon!*

Gu Kaifeng's reluctance was evident on his face as his father drove him away. Meanwhile, Lin Feiran made his way to the children's section. He retrieved the water bottle that Gu Kaifeng had drunk five minutes before. He hesitated for a moment before unscrewing the cap and quickly licked the opening of it with his tongue, not unlike a true little pervert.

After absorbing the yang energy in such a way, Lin Ferian's cheeks flushed like a tomato as he stood in the bustling market's aisles. *Ahhh, I can't believe I just did that! Where did my dignity go?* He then hastily tucked the bottle back into his bag.

Lin Feiran selected a few items after an hour of exploration:

a kid's ball, a fluffy bunny toy, a doll that caught his eye, some hair accessories and a bag full of snacks that kids would love like jellies, cookies, and chocolates. He also picked up some yellow talisman paper, a few bundles of incense sticks, and a small incense burner.

With his shopping complete, Lin Feiran hailed a taxi at the market entrance to head back to school. Given the rush hour traffic at 5 p.m., what should have been a short ride became a nearly hour-long journey.

Since parting with his "personal yang energy shield" aka "yang energy ATM" that afternoon, Lin Feiran had relied on the mineral water bottle imbued with Gu Kaifeng's saliva to counteract his Yin-yang Eye three times. However, as he neared the school gates, about five to six minutes away, he felt an all-too-familiar, unwelcome chill. Hastily, he unscrewed the bottle for another sip, hoping for the comforting warmth of yang energy, only to find it completely empty. The bottle's mouthpiece seemed to have lost all traces of Gu Kaifeng's yang energy saliva.

Not ready to surrender, Lin Feiran extended his tongue and cautiously licked the bottle's mouthpiece, hoping to find some residual yang energy. Unfortunately, his efforts proved futile, leaving him feeling more like a creepy pervert than anything else.

*Well, it's all about facing your fears.* Lin Feiran convinced himself and secured the cap before tucking the bottle into his backpack. He glanced nervously around the taxi's front seat from his position in the back, surrounded by his three large shopping bags. He expected the passenger seat to be empty.

But it wasn't.

A woman, or more precisely, a female ghost, occupied the seat. She appeared rather ordinary aside from her unusually pale face. She was not the type to haunt nightmares since she lacked gruesome, bloodied features on her still intact appearance. She could even be considered "good-looking" among ghosts. She was about 35 years old and dressed in a long gown with dark hair cascading down her shoulders, a hint of the elegance she must have possessed in life.

Lin Feiran wasn't overly scared upon seeing her; the ghost simply sat there, resting her pale, slender hand atop the driver's on the gear shift. Her fingers were as thin as reeds, and a simple wedding ring, oversized for her finger, seemed like it might slip off at any moment.

Observing more closely, Lin Feiran saw that the driver's left hand, which gripped the steering wheel, also bore a simple wedding band.

"Be careful, that was too fast," the female ghost admonished softly, breaking the silence.

Lin Feiran couldn't help but silently agree.

*Yeah, this taxi uncle was indeed driving a bit too fast.*

Soon, the car halted at the school's main entrance. The driver, pointing to the metre's fare, reached back towards Lin Feiran.

Lin Feiran handed the exact fare to the driver, hesitating before making his move to exit. Cracking the door open slightly, he summoned his courage and stuttered, "Ex-excuse me, sir... could I ask if you were married? And if you lost your wife to an illness?"

The driver looked confused, his brows knitting together as he responded gruffly, "What's this about?"

With a determined heart, Lin Feiran braced himself and blurted out his words in a rapid-fire manner. "Did she have a mole by the corner of her mouth? Was she slender with pale skin and mono-lids? Did she have a distinctive nose and hair that fell just below her shoulders? Did she often wear a long, grass-green dress and a wedding ring like yours? She would frequently tuck her hair behind her ears?"

"Jesus..." The driver was visibly shocked, his cigarette dropping from his mouth as he gasped, "How did you know my wife?"

The female ghost turned to look gently at Lin Feiran. As their eyes met, Lin Feiran's widened in surprise, and she began to speak.

"Please cut back on smoking—two packs is too much. Try to stick to one," Lin Feiran started repeating her messages."Drive more carefully and avoid erratic lane changes. Xiaohua's silence these days isn't defiance; he's distressed about failing a test and is afraid to tell you. Go easy on the lectures. And do make time for a medical check-up. Your snoring has gotten worse over the past six months, and also... that..." Lin Feiran hesitated, rubbing his nose and continued with a touch of awkwardness, "She never expressed it openly, thinking it might feel awkward after being married for so many years, but she loves you. Deeply."

With that, Lin Feiran grabbed his three bags and bolted out of the car, rushing towards the school gates, his heart pounding for more reasons than just the sprint.

Lin Feiran came to a halt, no longer daring to sprint forward. In just a short distance of less than twenty metres, he had bumped into several ghosts. With his Yin-yang Eye activated,

every collision was impossible to ignore. Each encounter left a bone-deep chill and an unbearable ache throughout his body. No longer risking the possibility of the taxi driver chasing after him with questions, he took a break and gasped for air, hands on his knees. He pulled out his phone and dialled Gu Kaifeng. As the phone rang, Lin Feiran threw a glance back at the taxi. It remained parked in place, with the driver showing no intention of either confronting him or driving away. The car simply stayed there.

"Hey, babe." came Gu Kaifeng's voice from the other end.

As dusk gave way to night, the last remnants of twilight disappeared below the horizon, leaving everything enveloped in shadows. The weak light from energy-saving street lamps and nearby food stalls barely pierced the growing darkness. The night seemed to amplify the presence of death, blending the faces of passers-by into the dark. Those with fainter yang energy appeared almost ghostly in the unnerving gloom.

Crouching down, Lin Feiran set his bags aside and hugged his knees like a vulnerable, gloomy mushroom. "What are you doing? Got a minute?" he asked, urgency in his tone.

"Just wrapping up some laundry." Gu Kaifeng replied over the sound of running water. "What's up, baby? Something wrong?"

Lin Feiran bit his lip, his gaze fixed on the school gate with increasing anxiety. The night seemed to energize the ghosts, making them more animated and numerous. Beyond the iron gates, he could see a throng of ghosts congregating on the path to the dormitory, their numbers swelling as the evening wore on. Furthermore, there was a group of ghosts who seemed intent on leaving the school grounds; they surged toward the gate,

seamlessly drifting through the iron bars...

As night began to fall, the ghosts with fewer attachments ventured out of the school to seek amusement. After all, being stuck at a graveyard day in and day out could really dull the senses. A bit of nightlife did wonders to lift the "spirits".

The urge to dash towards the school battled with the chilling sight of the ghostly assembly, draining Lin Feiran's willpower. After a beat of hesitation, his fleeting courage deflated like a balloon. He crouched back down to the vulnerable mushroom state. "Could you pick me up at the school gate?" he pleaded breathlessly.

Upon hearing Lin Feiran's request, Gu Kaifeng immediately shut off the water, leaving the clothes he was cleaning behind. He quickly dried his hands on his pants as he hurried out of the dormitory. "What's happening?" he inquired with concern.

Lin Feiran, teetering on the brink of tears, struggled with his explanation. "It's nothing, really... just, can you please come? I'll treat you to milk tea tomorrow," he offered, his voice frail.

Gu Kaifeng had already left the dormitory by then, effortlessly leaping down the three steps in front of the building, his expensive sneakers silent against the concrete. As he sprinted towards the school gates, he tried to catch his breath. "Why the urgent call if it's nothing? Missing your man already?" he teased.

A shiver went through Lin Feiran as yet another ghost brushed past him, his frustration mounting. "No!"

Gu Kaifeng pretended to be irritated, playfully retorting, "Fine then, I won't come." However, he hastened his steps towards the school gate.

While he did a good job of quieting his running and heavy

breathing, someone paying close attention could still detect them. But with Lin Feiran's focus scattered by chilling sensation from the ghostly brushes and his own trepidation, Gu Kaifeng's subdued pants and steps were barely registered.

"Well, you're on your own then. See ya later," Gu Kaifeng said, feigning indifference.

Feeling unjustly treated but not daring to provoke Gu Kaifeng further, Lin Feiran composed himself and conceded, "Okay, I admit it—I miss you. Are you happy now?"

As Gu Kaifeng almost reached the gate, he persisted, "Miss who? I want to hear you say it."

Lin Feiran sniffled, not wanting to navigate the ghost-populated path back to the dorm alone. He mustered all his courage for a necessary heroic sacrifice, and he bellowed, "I miss you, my hubby! Are you satisfied now? Just hurry over!"

"Just a sec, hubby's on his way. One, two... And, look, I'm here," Gu Kaifeng's voice suddenly resonated from behind Lin Feiran, both over the phone and in person, accompanied by a reassuring touch as two fingers gently pressed against Lin Feiran's neck.

In that instant of contact, it felt as though they leapt from the brisk chill of early winter straight into the warmth of mid-summer. The cold evening air and the persistent yin energy of the graveyard disappeared, replaced by a comforting and sweet surge of yang energy. This energy seemed to permeate the air around them, flowing through Lin Feiran from his fingertips, dispelling all traces of fear and vulnerability. Crouched on the ground, the Lin- little mushroom was overwhelmed by emotions he couldn't fully grasp. He turned to see Gu Kaifeng standing behind him,

phone in hand, catching his breath from the run.

Catching Lin Feiran's gaze, Gu Kaifeng pocketed his phone and slid his hand into his pocket, tilting his head with a confident smirk. He said charismatically, "There, you said it yourself. You missed your hubby."

Lin Feiran did not argue or try to defend himself. He stood up and faced Gu Kaifeng, his eyes shimmering like stars in water.

"Let me help you with those," Gu Kaifeng offered, taking the three bags from Lin Feiran. He reasoned the phone call to be because of their weight and chuckled. "Couldn't manage them by yourself, huh?"

"They're not too heavy for me." Lin Feiran protested internally.

*I could manage them on my own, really!*

Knowing Lin Feiran's tendency to never verbally back down, Gu Kaifeng didn't ask him further. Instead, he moved closer, a genuine smile gracing his lips as he playfully suggested, "How about a reward for your hubby's heroic effort?"

Lin Feiran's heartbeat raced. He reached up to tap Gu Kaifeng's cheek lightly, murmuring, "Reward granted."

"Trying to get off easy, are we? I'll just claim it myself," Gu Kaifeng retorted, leaning in quickly to plant a kiss on Lin Feiran's cheek.

"Hey! You..." Lin Feiran protested, his hand flying to his face as he glanced around nervously. "What if someone saw us?!"

"Who's around?" Gu Kaifeng surveyed their surroundings. A few students were making their way back to school, too far to notice them. "No one's close enough to see."

Had Lin Feiran not brought it up, Gu Kaifeng might have overlooked the perfect chance to sneak in a little something more. So, he leaned in again, gently tilting his head and giving a quick, bold kiss on Lin Feiran's soft, pretty lips. Caught off guard, Lin Feiran's eyes widened in surprise, but before he could react, Gu Kaifeng kissed him again, this time letting his lips linger with a playful curiosity that explored the softness of his lips before drawing back.

The unexpected series of kisses left Lin Feiran blushing furiously. Thinking about how the crowd of ghosts he saw earlier might've been their audience heightened his embarrassment, making his cheeks burn even hotter.

Gu Kaifeng showed no signs of stopping, like a big, eager dog excitedly greeting its owner after a long absence. Moving in for yet another kiss, Lin Feiran quickly placed a hand on Gu Kaifeng's forehead. "Stop your fucking kissing!" His anxiety peaked, and he let slip a curse under his breath.

Gu Kaifeng's retort was extremely cheeky. "Exactly, kiss to fuck."

Lin Feiran, whose counterattack backfired into further teasing, was completely at a loss for words.

Gu Kaifeng looked visibly delighted after the stolen kisses. Eyeing the bags in hand with curiosity, he asked, "What are all these for?"

Lin Feiran, dodging the question, scratched his nose and averted his gaze. "They're... for my grandpa. The Qingming Festival is coming up, and I thought I'd get a head start."

"Qingming Festival?" Gu Kaifeng chuckled. "Isn't that half a year away?"

"I'm planning ahead. Is that a problem?" Lin Feiran's response came with a hint of defensiveness.

"Of course not. Whatever you say, Ranran," Gu Kaifeng responded with playful acquiescence, his gaze drifting back to the bags. Spotting a fluffy white bunny toy, he couldn't resist teasing, "Is this also for our dear grandpa?"

Lin Feiran fell silent, prompting Gu Kaifeng to continue. "He must have eclectic tastes."

Cornered, Lin Feiran hastily concocted an explanation. "Those are for the children in my extended family. Could you stop snooping around?"

"Okay, okay." Gu Kaifeng straightened up and focused on walking forward.

Gu Kaifeng carelessly placed the bags on the floor after they reached their dorm room. He then rolled up his sleeves, ready to return to the wash station for his half-cleaned clothes. Meanwhile, Lin Feiran was looking for a place for the ritual. After a thoughtful search for a tranquil spot within the dormitory, he decided on a storeroom on their floor. The room was a collection of neglected items: soiled mops, brooms, and worn rags, usually left unlocked. However, its interior latch offered an option for privacy, and a small window ensured sufficient air circulation, making it the ideal location for his discreet ritual of offerings to the little ghost girl. Satisfied with his choice, Lin Feiran made his way back to the room to gather the necessary items.

Gu Kaifeng was busy hanging laundry near the window. Without glancing away from his task, he made a remark when

Lin Feiran walked back in. "Ranran, your socks are impressively devoid of any smell."

Lin Feiran's tail was instinctively high up with pride as he boasted, "Of course. I'm very particular about personal hygiene. My sweat is almost odourless, and my socks stay fresh for three days, unlike some people's..."

He halted mid-sentence, turning towards Gu Kaifeng with an expression that was both surprised and accusatory.

Gu Kaifeng met his gaze with a smirk, prompting, "Go on."

Grabbing his hair in a frantic frenzy, Lin Feiran blurted out, "How on earth would you know how my socks smell?!"

"I washed them," came Gu Kaifeng's straightforward reply.

"You, you..." Lin Feiran stuttered, pointing at Gu Kaifeng, "You didn't just wash them, you also..." He hesitated, too mortified to finish the sentence, while Gu Kaifeng casually nodded, "Yes, exactly."

Lin Feiran slumped into his chair with a thump, repeatedly patting his chest as if seeking comfort. *I desperately need a SuXiao JiuXin Wan pill right now!*[15]

"What's the big deal? It's just washing some socks," Gu Kaifeng responded with unabashed cheekiness.

"But you also..." Lin Feiran blushed and struggled to articulate his embarrassment.

"Also what?" Gu Kaifeng's eyebrow raised.

Exasperated, Lin Feiran decided to drop the subject. He gathered the offerings for the little ghost girl and headed for the

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15 SuXiao JiuXin Wan: well-known Chinese brand of chest relief pills that have an instant effect.

door, Gu Kaifeng trailing behind him. "Where are you off to?"

Lin Feiran shot him a glare, he grounded his teeth and growled, "I'm off to cast a 'Tame Head' spell on you!"[16]

Lin Feiran grabbed the three bags and hurried into the storeroom. He promptly locked the door, opened the window for ventilation, and then carefully laid out the offerings for the little ghost girl on the floor. After that, he prepared the incense burner, joss sticks, and yellow talisman paper.

Time to focus on the ritual.

The kisses from Gu Kaifeng at the school gates had filled him with yang energy, banishing any lingering fear. Yet, as he thought back on those moments, his heart raced with an unfamiliar rush of excitement. Calling Gu Kaifeng "hubby" had been a spur-of-the-moment decision driven by urgency, but reflecting on it now, Lin Feiran found himself surprisingly not against the term. Even amidst their flurry of kisses, his main concern had been the possibility of being seen by others, not the act itself. Rather than feeling anger or resistance, he recognized a part of him that had relished in those intimate moments.

*No, this isn't right...* As Lin Feiran methodically burned the yellow talisman, his mind wandered back to Gu Kaifeng. Suddenly, he snapped his head up, his expression a blend of realization and concern as he gazed towards the storeroom door.

*Have I actually fallen for him? So fast? Uhh...am I gay now?*

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16 Tame Head: Black magic from Southeast Asia and some parts of China. Victims under this spell can be controlled remotely, or even killed remotely.

Lin Feiran gave his cheeks a couple of slaps, a physical reminder to refocus on the task at hand: making offerings to the little ghost girl. Following his grandpa's guidance from the notebook, Lin Feiran knelt before the incense burner, closed his eyes, and pictured the girl in his mind, dedicating the offerings specifically to her.

Once the incense sticks had fully burned down, Lin Feiran carefully cleaned up the storeroom and repacked the offering items, securing the bag tightly. He planned to stow it in his dorm room's cabinet temporarily, wanting to ensure the gifts reached her before disposing of them properly.

The little ghost girl, who had departed this world at just seven years of age due to illness, received what might have been her first-ever "package" that night. It was a bundle of items representing the childhood joys she had missed out on, including a ball, a bunny toy, a doll, an assortment of snacks, and hair accessories.

Lin Feiran went back to his dorm room and meticulously arranged the offerings for the little ghost girl in the cabinet. His attention, however, inadvertently wandered to the drying rack. There, the innocuous sight of three pairs of socks and two underwears hanging to dry sent his heart racing towards a heart attack. Again, he felt an urgent need for a SuXiao JiuXin Wan pill. Immediately!

Little Master Lin solemnly vowed to change his laundry habits for good. *I will no longer allow dirty laundry to accumulate. Every item—be it socks, underwear, or any other piece of clothing—was to be washed immediately after use!*

This event led Lin Feiran to confront and break his

long-standing habit of neglecting his laundry, marking an unexpected turn in his daily routine.

"Ranran, how about we tackle the homework together?" Gu Kaifeng sat at his desk and waved his physics workbook, warmly proposing a "study date".

*Gu Kaifeng, the instigator of all this chaos. Aside from overstepping by washing my socks and underwear without permission, he had also audaciously flipped my sexual orientation from straight to gay. Yet, there's not even a hint of remorse. Ugh!*

"I'm fine on my own," Lin Feiran declared with fierce determination, striding over to his study desk and sitting down with a force that seemed to shake the earth. He opened his own workbook and dove into the problems. Physics was his forte, making it easy for him to catch up and outdo Gu Kaifeng.

With a prideful wag of his tail, Lin Feiran shot a sideways glance at Gu Kaifeng contemptfully. "Looks like you're falling behind."

His real goal? To air out his irritation.

"Mmm..." Gu Kaifeng couldn't get enough of Lin Feiran's self-satisfied little act, drawing out his words with a fondness in his tone, he cooed, "Clearly, no one's a match for our genius Ranran. Ranran is just too clever."

*Sweet talk won't sway me!* Lin Feiran thought, even as a smile almost escaped his control. He willed it down.

Their homework session lasted until the dorm lights were scheduled to go out. Still simmering with frustration from the day's earlier events, Lin Feiran grabbed his basin a bit more forcefully than usual for a trip to the wash station, deliberately letting the door slam behind him. When Gu Kaifeng came to

wash up beside him, Lin Feiran couldn't resist taking another jab and cranked the water tap to its fullest, sending splashes in Gu Kaifeng's direction pettily.

Gu Kaifeng, amused by this restless young beast version of Lin Feiran, chose to keep silent in the face of the little storm.

Returning to the dorm after their nightly routines, Gu Kaifeng slipped into his pyjamas and stretched out on his bed. Meanwhile, Lin Feiran used the wardrobe door to shield himself as he changed. Then, the Lin-angry bird approached Gu Kaifeng's bed with exaggerated confidence, demanding, "Move over, I'll join you," while looking down at Gu Kaifeng, who was sprawling across the bed in the shape of a starfish.

Gu Kaifeng replied with a mischievous grin, "I might if I hear something nice from you. Otherwise, sleep alone."

A dead silence hung in the air for a good five seconds before Lin Feiran complied in a softer tone, "Could you move over a bit, please?"

Gu Kaifeng kept a stern face and remained silent.

With a touch of grudging resentment, Lin Feiran relented, "... Hubby, could you please make some room?"

That was all it took for Gu Kaifeng to shift to one side, obeying like a soldier at attention. He carefully positioned himself along the edge of the bed, leaving plenty of room for Lin Feiran.

Suppressing a chuckle, Lin Feiran struggled to maintain his stern facade.

Gu Kaifeng beckoned Lin Feiran with a gentle crook of his finger, murmuring, "Come on over, babe. Just calling me 'hubby' will do. If you want, I'd even consider making the desk my bed."

Lin Feiran snorted and climbed onto the bed before wrap-

ping himself in the comforter.

"I mean it," Gu Kaifeng added teasingly. "Not convinced? Just point at a spot, and that's where I'll sleep."

Lin Feiran gave him a pointed look, insistence in his reply. "Stay right where you are. Don't even think about moving."

The corner of Gu Kaifeng's mouth quirked up as he pulled Lin Feiran into a warm embrace. "So you do like being in my arms."

Lin Feiran kept quiet, his mind racing. *Absurd! I'm only after your yang energy, that's all!*

The room fell quiet for a moment before Gu Kaifeng tightened his embrace. "So, have you finally accepted me as your boyfriend?"

"...What? No, that's not what I meant," Lin Feiran tensed.

"And yet, you called me 'hubby' so naturally," Gu Kaifeng pointed out, squeezing Lin Feiran's waist, unwilling to let the moment pass.

Lin Feiran gave a guilty snort, stubbornly defending himself, "It's merely a nickname. I could say it to anyone." With that, he turned around and playfully tapped the pillow twice, then cooed affectionately, "Hubby, you alright with me laying my head on you? Comfortable?"

Gu Kaifeng yanked Lin Feiran back against him, caught between fondness and frustration. "You want me to fuck you right now, aren't you?"

Lin Feiran's protest came out messily, a deep blush flushing his cheeks. "What are you talking about?!" he stammered, the words spilling out in a rush. "Even if... if we were to in such a scenario... I would be the one on top..." His voice trailed off, his

conviction fading as he spoke.

"Whatever makes you happy." Gu Kaifeng responded, casually unbuttoning his pyjamas and leaning back a bit. He took Lin Feiran's hand and guided it from his collarbone down to his lower abdomen.

Gu Kaifeng's physique was remarkably mature for his age, making one wonder what he had been eating since he was young, for his frame bore none of the naivete typically seen in boys his age. The encounter with the firm muscles under the soft skin ignited a warmth in Lin Feiran's consciousness. The moment Lin Feiran's fingers brushed over the two erect nipples, his mind seemed to have hit a fever pitch. Gu Kaifeng, ever the mischievous one, held Lin Feiran's hand in place, coaxing him to press and massage the area.

A confusing blend of embarrassment and an unnameable thrill surged within Lin Feiran, causing his toes to curl involuntarily. His Adam's apple also bobbed nervously.

Gu Kaifeng pulled Lin Feiran back into his embrace and held him tightly, their bodies pressed together with no space in between. He whispered close to Lin Feiran's reddened ears, "Honey, do you like it?"

Lin Feiran, taken aback, looked like a surprised hamster with his wide, glossy eyes. After a moment's pause, he hesitated, "No... it's not my thing."

"How stubborn." Gu Kaifeng was no fool. From Lin Feiran's reaction, he could tell that Lin Feiran's denial was more a sign of shyness than true dislike. So, he went one step further and flicked his tongue against Lin Feiran's earlobe. He lowered his voice, speaking in a flirtatious tone that seemed to dance on the

edge. "Weren't you the one who wanted to lead? Wanna shag me?"

Before Gu Kaifeng could finish his words, Lin Feiran felt as if something in his mind had snapped, like a string breaking. Panting heavily, he admitted, "I... don't want to."

His words were steeped in truth as he was utterly spent. He seemed to have morphed into a sticky rice cake fried to a soft, gooey mess, glued to the pan's bottom, utterly defenceless. In this state, he was powerless against Gu Kaifeng. If anything, it was Gu Kaifeng who could do whatever he pleased with him.

Gu Kaifeng, ignited by Lin Feiran's unintentional teasing, was restless, yet he restrained himself from going even further. He could only lift Lin Feiran's chin, deliver a series of fervent kisses, and then press the "soft, gooey" Lin Feiran against the wall, kneading him from chest to thigh as an outlet for his pent-up desires. At first, Lin Feiran showed a little resistance, muttering only a few words of protest. However, as he felt Gu Kaifeng's desire grow and his hands venture into dangerous areas, Lin Feiran managed to push him away. Tucking himself snugly into the quilt with cheeks aflame, Lin Feiran chided in a firm voice, "Isn't this enough for you? Don't we have classes tomorrow?"

"I'm satisfied," Gu Kaifeng relented, pulling back his roving hands, and made a happy resolve to not wash his hands for a week.

In the ensuing silence, Lin Feiran pulled the quilt around himself more tightly and turned to face Gu Kaifeng, his gaze intense. He whispered a question that had been answered several times before. "Do you really like me?"

Gu Kaifeng affirmed without a moment's pause, "Yes, genu-

inely." It was a question that didn't need asking.

Lin Feiran pursed his lips and sought further assurance, "And when did you start feeling this way?"

Gu Kaifeng's response was sincere, "From the very first day I saw you. I was drawn to everything about you—your nose, your eyes, your lips, your face, your arms, your legs, your waist, and... of course, your butt. You're exactly my type."

Lin Feiran felt a surge of annoyance! *Why did he have to emphasise the butt?!*

Gu Kaifeng elaborated, "Initially, you barely spoke to me and didn't seem to want to talk to me, so I thought you weren't interested. But then, you started engaging with me more and flirting with me every day. That's when I knew I was falling for you."

Lin Feiran's expression clouded over, and displeasure could be seen in his eyes. "So, it's just my looks? There are plenty of attractive people out there. You could find someone else. Maybe you should stop flirting with me from now on..."

"Scared I'll fall for someone else if they catch my eye?" Gu Kaifeng decoded Lin Feiran's actual concern with ease. He brushed Lin Feiran's just-kissed, now rosy lips with his thumb. His voice was soft and earnest, and with a sparkle of mirth in his eyes, he locked his gaze on Lin Feiran and continued. "It's true your beauty caught my eye at first. But what made me stay, what made me fall so deeply, is the incredible person you are. My Ranran, you're brilliant, utterly charming, incredibly kind, and full of grace. You play the piano like a dream, your singing captivates, you ace your studies, your shots never miss, you leap high, sprint fast, and your smile with those cute dimples? Completely

enchanting. Your merits are too numerous to count. When you draw a guideline, I'm convinced your lines are the straightest in my eyes. Your sneeze? Music to my ears. Just one look from you turns me to mush, and if you smile at me, I'm on cloud nine. All I crave is to hold you, kiss you, be with you, hear your voice, and make love to you. And if you stopped being as gorgeous as you are this very second, it wouldn't matter—I'm head over heels. There's no going back..."

Overwhelmed by the cascade of compliments, Lin Feiran was momentarily lost, his ability to bask in his usual self-satisfaction short-circuited from overwork. Thus, he could only gaze at Gu Kaifeng with an adorkable look, not a trace of smug satisfaction to be found. It was as though a cosy nook within him was brimming with warm, sudsy water which, upon being agitated by Gu Kaifeng's praises, exploded into countless shimmering bubbles. These bubbles enveloped every brain cell in Lin Feiran's mind and left all his thoughts blissfully empty.

"Now, I've shared my deepest feelings," Gu Kaifeng gently nudged Lin Feiran. "Your turn. What about me caught your fancy? Was it when I took care of you during your fever and showed you care and attention you didn't expect?"

Lin Feiran snapped back to reality after a brief daydream, rolling his eyes slowly as he said, "I guess it's because you're a rogue."

Gu Kaifeng chuckled, conceding with a shrug. "Fine by me, as long as you're into me."

Lin Feiran, caught in the warmth of the moment yet stubborn in his denial, hastily corrected with a defiance that lacked conviction, "I didn't say I liked you!"

"Okay. Goodnight," Gu Kaifeng's smile spread warmly, almost like he'd heard something entirely different. With that, he wrapped his arms around the not-so-honest little sticky rice cake beside him and fell asleep.

The midterm results came out the very next day, Monday. Gu Kaifeng and Lin Feiran found themselves ranked sixth and seventh in their class, respectively, with Lin Feiran trailing behind by just four points.

*It all boiled down to the Language Arts exam!*

Clutching his report card, Lin Feiran was determined. "Next time, I'll surpass you."

Since their honest conversation the previous night, Lin Feiran had felt a bit awkward around Gu Kaifeng, unsure how to break the ice again. He finally found his chance.

"You've got this," Gu Kaifeng said, ruffling Lin Feiran's hair affectionately. He then whimsically drew a red heart around their adjacent rankings on the report card.

Lin Feiran paused for a beat before saying, "...Just make sure the teachers don't catch sight of that."

He had overlooked the real issue yet again!

Gu Kaifeng didn't point it out, only responding with a low hum.

As Ms Zheng's English class came to a close, Lin Feiran felt the awakening of his Yin-yang Eye. Drawn by the faint sound of a child playing with a ball in the corridor, he made a point not to brush against Gu Kaifeng, avoiding the yang energy. As soon as class was dismissed, Lin Feiran was the first to dash out of the classroom.

And there, just as he suspected, was the little ghost girl, her spectral hand bouncing a spectral ball. The scene was eerily heartwarming—her innocent joy was palpable. The ball rolled away, and she chased after it with a light step, her actions ladylike as she gathered her skirt with one hand before bending down to pick it up. When Ms Zheng came into view, the girl immediately trailed after her.

Lin Feiran waved her way and called out softly, "Hey, kiddo."

The ghost girl glanced at him, then continued her merry chase of Ms Zheng, tightly holding on to her ball. Despite her slight transparency, she looked as endearing as any little girl might.

Following her, Lin Feiran forced himself to overlook the presence of other ghosts. He covered his mouth, whispering, "I'm the one who gave you those toys and snacks. I'm not a bad guy."

At his words, the little ghost girl stopped in her tracks. She looked up at him, wide-eyed and timid, the ball in one hand and her dress in the other, and spoke quietly, "Thank you."

A grin of satisfaction spread across Lin Feiran's face. "You're welcome..."

"Goodbye," the little ghost girl replied quickly before she hurried off into Ms Zheng's office, leaving Lin Feiran standing alone, somewhat perplexed.

The office door was slightly open, allowing Lin Feiran a peek inside. The little ghost girl had made Ms Zheng's desk her own little corner. She had placed her spectral doll beside a neatly stacked pile of English assignments and set a bunny toy atop the laptop. An array of snacks was also arranged with precision—

perhaps an orderly habit carried over from life.

She gently set the ball down by the desk's leg and stood on her two toes to select two jellies from the pile of snacks. Ms Zheng, absorbed in reading student report cards, noticed none of this. The little ghost girl carefully placed a jelly near her mother's hand, murmuring, "Mommy, thank you for all your hard work." She performed this gesture even though she understood her words would go unheard, her presence unseen, and the jelly untouched.

Afterwards, she adjusted her skirt, sat down by the leg of the chair, and carefully opened a jelly package to start eating. This simple act filled her hollow eyes with joy, turning them into happy crescents.

Lin Feiran was so captivated by the little ghost girl at the entrance of the senior year two teachers' office that he was startled when Ms Li suddenly called out, "There you are. I was just about to send someone to find you."

Hearing Ms Li's voice filled Lin Feiran with a sense of dread. He hadn't looked in her direction until she spoke, and for a moment, he considered pretending not to hear her and making a quick getaway. That fleeting thought was crushed when she sternly said, "Lin Feiran! I'm talking to you. Come here, now!"

Left with no choice, Lin Feiran plastered a forced smile on his face and hurried over, "Ah, Ms Li, were you looking for me?"

Ms Li peered over her glasses, which reflected a stern light as she scolded, "Let's drop the antics, shall we? Your midterm performance—what happened there? You seem to be doing fine in your other classes. Are you neglecting Language Arts?"

"No, not at all, Ms Li. I believe I've actually improved since

last time..." Lin Feiran started, though his tone was uncertain. "I really have been focusing during your classes."

"Focusing, huh?" Ms Li retorted, pulling Lin Feiran's Language Arts exam paper closer and circling a multiple-choice question with her red pen. "I went over this term in class right before the exams. Here's a second chance for you. What's the correct answer?"

"Could I, perhaps, have a moment to think?" Lin Feiran asked, his face screwed up in thought. He glanced at the question, his gaze flicking around, hoping to catch a hint from his classmates' papers. However, Ms Li, with her keen perception, moved the stack of papers out of his reach.

Lin Feiran felt a surge of despair.

Just as despair seemed to tighten its grip on him, he found unexpected help. The little ghost girl, clutching her bunny toy, tiptoed nearer. With her deep, dark eyes focused on the question underlined by Ms Li's red pen, she bravely glanced at other students' papers. Then, with a hint of shyness, she whispered to Lin Feiran, "It's A."

"Have you decided? Or are you just..." Ms Li was about to probe his hesitation when Lin Feiran, empowered by the ghost girl's advice, confidently cut in, "A is my answer!" He shot a silent thank you to the little ghost girl with his eyes.

Ms Li, caught off guard for a moment, quickly moved on to point out another error. "And what about this one?"

Again, the little ghost girl discreetly offered her help, whispering, "It's C."

With a subtle grin, Lin Feiran declared, "C, Ms Li."

The ultimate test was a poetry completion question Lin Fei-

ran had missed on the exam. "What follows 'I'm grieved because our life is just a brief moment'?"

The little ghost girl scrunched her face, attempting to read the answers on other papers. She was struggling with her limited knowledge as she had passed away in her early elementary years. Yet, after some hesitation, she managed to offer a clue, "I don't know the first word, it's something about 'the Yangtze River's'..."

That clue sparked Lin Feiran's memory. It was from "Ode to the Red Cliff" by Su Shi. "It's 'Envious Yangtze River flows on forever'!"

Ms Li, visibly frustrated, leaned back in her chair and crossed her arms. "Seems like you have all the answers now, after the exam. A bit late, don't you think?"

Beneath the desk, Lin Feiran silently gave his ghostly ally an appreciative "OK" sign. However, the little ghost girl didn't acknowledge him, she just hugged her bunny and drifted back to Ms Zheng's side without a glance back.

Having narrowly avoided trouble, Lin Feiran attempted to charm his way out with Ms Li, offering a sheepish smile. "Ms Li, Language Arts has always been a tough one for me. Exams just add to the pressure. But really, I do listen in your class..."

Ms Li, mixing a tad of mild reproach with resignation, waved him away, her annoyance already fading. "Alright, just make sure you prepare better next time."

Stepping out of the office, Lin Feiran looked back to catch the little ghost girl engrossed with her bunny toy. He caught her eye and flashed a charming wink and warm smile—a combo that could melt many young girls' hearts. The little ghost girl paused, taken aback, then shyly averted her gaze, her fingers idly

toying with her bunny's ear.

*Looks like she's starting to trust me, huh?* This thought brought Lin Feiran a small sense of achievement. He dashed back to the classroom through the eerily silent corridor. Under the watchful eye of the imposing, half-headed Old Principal, he casually tapped Gu Kaifeng's cheek to siphon a bit of yang energy. Then, as if it was just another day, he hunched over to dig out the chemistry exam papers for the upcoming class review, leaving Gu Kaifeng fizzing with unvented excitement from Lin Feiran's playful tease.

"You dare to flirt because you know I wouldn't kiss you in the classroom?" Gu Kaifeng prodded Lin Feiran's ticklish waist.

Lin Feiran dodged, a hint of shyness flashing in his eyes. "What? Who's talking about kisses?"

"Just wait until after the national college entrance exam..." Gu Kaifeng's sultry breath brushed against Lin Feiran's ear, his voice a low rumble, "I'll kiss you on the podium, and the stage in the sports field..."

Lin Feiran bit his lip but was still unable to stifle his laughter. He rested his cheek on one hand, covering his mouth, and teased, "Why not kiss me in the principal's office for an extra thrill?"

Gu Kaifeng's response was immediate and cheeky, "Added it to the list."

Lin Feiran immediately stopped teasing.

Clearing his throat to steer the conversation back on track, Lin Feiran adopted a more serious tone as he handed over the chemistry papers. "Can we focus on studying? I didn't ask for kisses. Check your errors, the class is about to start."

A sly smile flickered across Gu Kaifeng's lips as he turned his attention to the papers.

"Just you wait."

# Chapter 13

The afternoon's second class was the "on paper only" PE class. For once, the PE teacher wasn't absent due to "illness" or mysterious commitments.

Following their warm-up laps, the teacher announced a period of free play. Lin Feiran had initially planned to join Gu Kaifeng, Wang Zhuo, and the other boys for a 3-on-3 basketball game. However, his Yin-yang Eye activated upon arriving at the court, and he noticed the little ghost girl playing near the court. In the end, he opted to watch from the sidelines, so Wang Zhuo had to find another player to keep the teams balanced.

Lin Feiran watched the game until he was sure he'd gone unnoticed, then quietly made his way to the other hoop where the little ghost girl was imitating the senior students playing. She was attempting to shoot her small ball into the hoop, but lacking the strength, her throws never reached high enough or veered off target even if she did manage a higher toss.

Her earnest, albeit unsuccessful, attempts dispelled any

discomfort Lin Feiran felt towards her. He chuckled as he approached her, and when their eyes locked, he beckoned her closer with a gesture and whispered invitingly, "Come here."

The little ghost girl seemed friendlier since their morning encounter. Moving towards Lin Feiran with her ball, she stopped a couple of metres away and greeted him with a polite "Hello."

"Hello," Lin Feiran responded with a wave and a bright smile. A nearby student, noticing Lin Feiran's gesture, gave a puzzled look. Lin Feiran quickly dismissed it with a wave. "It's nothing, go on."

The little ghost girl, amused by the slight confusion her presence caused, let out a quiet giggle behind her hand.

Lin Feiran laughed as well, careful to cover his mouth to avoid further confusion. In a lowered voice, he offered, "I'm pretty good at shooting a basketball. Want me to show you how it's done?"

Her interest was evident as she glanced from Lin Feiran to the players under the hoop. "Are you better than them?"

With a confident grin, Lin Feiran boasted, "Heh, they're nothing compared to your big brother Ran here."

Her deep and endlessly dark eyes lit up with excitement. "Really? I want to see."

With a playful lift of his eyebrows, Lin Feiran seized the opportunity to make an offer. "First, I hope to hear any wishes you still have. I want to help you."

After a moment's hesitation, the little ghost girl anxiously twisted the ends of her dress and whispered, "Okay."

Lin Feiran's tone became serious. "Remember, your pants will catch on fire if you lie."

The little ghost girl gave a solemn nod. "Mm-hmm."

Relieved, Lin Feiran asked, "So, what's your wish?"

Her eyes, dark as night, darted anxiously as she toyed with her ball's seams. She whispered, "I was very sick... my parents, they did everything they could. My mom was always by my side, while my dad searched high and low for doctors and worked day and night to pay for my treatment... Despite their efforts, they couldn't save me." Her voice cracked, and tears mingled with blood streaked down her cheeks, creating a sight that was both haunting and heartbreaking.

A pang of sorrow struck Lin Feiran. Glancing around to ensure no one noticed them, he tentatively reached out, patting the air above the little ghost girl's head in an attempt to offer comfort. "Hey, little one, tears don't suit your pretty face..."

As she wiped away her bloody tears, she continued, "It's my mom... she's taken it the hardest. She was so heartbroken the day I died; I couldn't leave her. My little brother was born two years after I passed, but she still misses me dearly. Sometimes, she cries over my photo albums late into the night. I can't bear to see her so sad. I don't want her to cry over me anymore." She paused and then lifted her gaze to Lin Feiran, her face innocent yet stained with tears of blood, and softly pleaded, "Could you tell her I was okay in the end? The painkillers worked and I didn't feel any pain. Really! She's tormented by the thought I suffered. And please, let her know that, with the toys and snacks you've given me, I'm genuinely happy and have no regrets." After another pause, she added firmly, "Just letting her know these things would mean the world to me, thank you so much."

Huddled away from the basketball-playing seniors, Lin Fei-

ran squatted on the ground like a little mushroom, sniffling and wiping his tears. He managed a tearful promise, "I promise I'll tell her."

The little ghost girl had learned to detach herself from mortal emotions since she had been dead for years. She quickly stopped crying once she began her story, in contrast to Lin Feiran. Seeing his distress, she echoed his earlier attempt to console him. "Don't cry. You won't look handsome if you do..."

Lin Feiran, face streaked with tears, sniffled defiantly and retorted, "Who says? I'm still handsome even when I cry!"

After a moment of reflection, the little girl voiced another wish. "Could you tell my mom I've always wanted us to go on a family trip to the aquarium and the amusement park? Since my attachment is to her, I can be wherever she is."

"Of course," Lin Feiran nodded, pulling out a tissue to blow his nose vigorously before wiping his eyes. "I just can't take this. It's too heartbreaking, too unfair..."

Her smile held a wisdom beyond her years as she whispered, "Death comes for everyone. I just left a bit earlier. But I'm content. I had the best parents, and my little brother... he's absolutely adorable. He used to giggle when I made scary faces at him. Now that he's older, he can't see me anymore."

Lin Feiran couldn't possibly imagine how "funny" those faces must've looked. He shuddered just thinking about it.

With a sigh that was too mature for her age, the little ghost girl pondered, "I need to move on, or my little brother will soon grow older than me."

Trying not to attract attention with his tears, Lin Feiran made a concerted effort to calm the storm of emotions swirling

within him. He took a few moments to dry his eyes and blow his nose. His voice was still a bit rough as he promised the little ghost girl. "I'll find a way to talk to your mom... Just give me five minutes to gather myself. Then, we can start on the basketball lesson."

True to his word, five minutes later, Lin Feiran stood up, his mood visibly brighter. "Ready to begin!"

Catching his enthusiasm, the little girl pumped her fist in the air and echoed, "Ready!"

In quiet tones, Coach Lin started their secret basketball lesson, covering his mouth to whisper, "The key to a good shot is using your legs for power, not just your hands. Let the strength flow from your feet..."

While Lin Feiran was showing the little ghost girl how to properly shoot a basketball, chatting away with glee, the sudden sound of footsteps made him snap his mouth shut and spin around. He then locked eyes with Gu Kaifeng.

With a mix of curiosity and mild annoyance, Gu Kaifeng slid his arm around Lin Feiran's waist, drawing him near. "Who have you been watching so intently over here?"

Lin Feiran answered with sincerity, "No one..."

*I've only been watching a ghost girl, so it's not a lie!*

"Why are your eyes red?" Gu Kaifeng asked, tilting Lin Feiran's chin up for a closer look. "Have you been crying? Is something wrong?"

"Cry? About what?" Lin Feiran deflected, slipping out of Gu Kaifeng's hold somewhat sheepishly. "I'm not Lin Daiyu. Just...

yawned a lot, that's all."[17]

Gu Kaifeng's brow furrowed, unable to think of any reason why Lin Feiran would be upset, but he nudged Lin Feiran's neck with a protective gesture, drawing their heads close together. In a low, teasing voice, he murmured, "If that's the case, then watch me play. You missed out on my stellar performance just now. How are you gonna make it up to me?"

"And why exactly do I owe you for your performance?" Lin Feiran fought back, amused by Gu Kaifeng's antics. It felt like a gentle caress around his heart, coaxing a smile to his face with the softest touch.

"I was doing my best for you," Gu Kaifeng claimed with a grin. He then tugged Lin Feiran back to their court with resolve. "Now, give me your full attention. Lose focus, and I'll be collecting my kisses tonight in the dorm."

The boldness of Gu Kaifeng's declaration sent a jolt through Lin Feiran, leaving him momentarily lost for words, only managing a flustered, "You're out of your mind."

Holding her ball close, the little ghost girl followed Lin Feiran. However, Lin Feiran was temporarily blind to her presence as he absorbed yang energy the moment Gu Kaifeng touched his wrist. After watching Gu Kaifeng rejoin his game for five minutes, Lin Feiran's Yin-yang Eye reactivated. He then turned his focus back to quietly guiding the little ghost girl beside him,

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17 Lin Daiyu: one of the prominent characters in the Chinese literary masterpiece "A Dream of Red Chamber" written by Cao Xueqin. Lin Daiyu is known for her poetic and sensitive nature; she would cry for the petal that falls from the tree, as it will remain in her transient of life.

discreetly covering his mouth as he corrected her posture.

"See, your arms should form a ninety-degree angle—they're too close right now. Do you know what 90 degrees looks like? It's like the angle between my body and the ground when I'm standing straight..."

Mid-explanation, Lin Feiran felt a chill run down his spine. Looking up, he caught Gu Kaifeng's intense gaze on him, predatory as a wolf on the hunt. Gu Kaifeng gestured a "1" with his finger, his smirk loaded with implications.

The message was clear—he'd be claiming a kiss back at the dorm tonight!

A wave of heat flooded Lin Feiran's cheeks as he defiantly responded with a middle finger.

Their silent communication didn't go unnoticed by their friends. Wang Zhuo, ever the mischief-maker, turned to He Hao, eyes twinkling. "Hey, He Hao, how do you sign 'I love you'?"

He Hao, playing along perfectly, mimicked Lin Feiran's gesture and declared with deadpan sincerity, "Exactly like this."

Gu Kaifeng and Wang Zhuo burst into laughter, with Wang Zhuo returning a middle finger to He Hao as Gu Kaifeng shot another teasing glance Lin Feiran's way.

Overwhelmed by a mix of embarrassment and irritation, Lin Feiran rubbed his face, resisting the impulse to directly confront Wang Zhuo, that undisputed drama king!

Lin Feiran continued coaching the little ghost girl for a while longer. She was a quick learner, absorbing the fundamentals of basketball with ease. Before long, she delighted in practising her new skills with a hoop alone.

Lin Feiran soon shifted his attention to Gu Kaifeng to avoid racking up more kisses. Gu Kaifeng's presence on the court was undeniably captivating. Each movement he made was a study in effortless grace, his uniform billowing with each leap and dash, the epitome of effortless cool. Every so often, Gu Kaifeng would steal a look at Lin Feiran. They locked eyes briefly ever so often, and Lin Feiran's heart would race while his head spun.

*Such allure could turn even the straightest to gay!* Lin Feiran lamented with a heavy heart.

As the end of the class bell rang, Wang Zhuo, basketball in hand, gathered a few boys for a water break. Gu Kaifeng, however, took a different route. He nonchalantly made his way towards Lin Feiran and casually strolled past him, heading toward a massive tree near the school's perimeter. After a few more steps, he paused, glanced back with a gleam of mischief in his eyes, and called out, "Honey, come here."

Lin Feiran had a hunch about what Gu Kaifeng was up to, yet his legs moved on their own, moving him in pace with Gu Kaifeng. They ended up behind a big tree at the edge of the school grounds. Positioning himself so they were hidden from view, Lin Feiran tried to appear nonchalant, nerves betraying him as he asked, "What's up?"

Gu Kaifeng's answer, a playful dart of his tongue across his lips, was suggestively clear. "You tell me. Seems like you have an idea."

Caught by surprise and instinctively mimicking Gu Kaifeng, Lin Feiran found himself licking his lips, his reaction as reflexive as a duckling mirroring its mother.

Gu Kaifeng couldn't help but laugh at his flustered state.

Just as Lin Feiran steeled himself for the kiss he thought was coming, a glance to the side revealed an unexpected observer—the little ghost girl! She was holding her ball and wearing an expression of pure curiosity. "What are you two doing here?" she asked with wide, innocent eyes as Lin Feiran noticed her.

The moment their eyes met, Lin Feiran's cheeks flared red.

*Damn it!*

"Why do I find you so irresistible?" Gu Kaifeng murmured to himself. Closing the distance, he pinned a fleeing Lin Feiran against a tree and dipped his head to claim a kiss. "This is for the one you owe me," He whispered.

"...Stop!" Trapped, Lin Feiran could only turn away, yet this led to Gu Kaifeng's kiss landing on his ear and sending a shiver down his spine instead.

"Stop? Why stop?" Gu Kaifeng continued, pressing kisses against Lin Feiran's inviting pale neck, challenging, "I was right about you. You do like the chase, whether you admit it or not. You knew what I was up to, yet here you are."

"I'm not playing any games!" Lin Feiran protested, feeling so unjustly accused that he could cry enough tears to flood the Great Wall.

*There's a kid right there watching us!!!*

Lin Feiran was aware that ghosts had been spectating during each of Gu Kaifeng's previous kisses. However, catching a ghost's gaze just moments before their lips met took his embarrassment to a whole new level, far surpassing mere awareness.

"Do you only get a thrill from being forced?" Gu Kaifeng turned Lin Feiran's face, delicately tasting and kissing his lips, murmuring in a raspy voice, "Really?"

Lin Feiran's cheeks burned. "Stop this fucking nonsense!" he cursed in his haste. However, Junior Lin, who was pressing against Gu Kaifeng, shamefully betrayed his protests. Its form and condition fervently assured Gu Kaifeng that Lin Feiran was indeed excited.

Gu Kaifeng didn't miss that. He chuckled softly and deepened the kiss.

Thus, in Gu Kaifeng's eyes, it became a fact that Lin Feiran was "a flirtatious fox who loves pretending he doesn't want it, only to enjoy being forced."

They lingered behind the tree until there were barely three minutes left before their next class.

The two of them bolted to the academic building. As they ran, Lin Feiran's fingers brushed his lips, which he was pretty sure Gu Kaifeng had kissed to the point of swelling. Too embarrassed to bring it up, he pretended to cough and covered his mouth until he reached his desk.

*Just one kiss? More like a dozen! Plus all that caressing, too!* Lin Feiran fumed silently, caught between annoyance and the thrill of having done it secretly at school. He'd willingly taken the bait, after all.

After the afternoon's second class, Lin Feiran hesitated outside the second-year office, peeking through the doorframe.

Ms Zheng was discussing the students' performances with the other teachers inside. To Lin Feiran, her usually stern face seemed to soften with a hint of tenderness. Knowing her to be a devoted mother allowed Lin Feiran to see her in a different light.

*Should I bring up her daughter's story straight up? Might not be the smartest move. I still have to face her till the national entrance exams are over. It might remind her of her daughter's loss every time she sees me after that. And then she'd never be able to move on...* Lin Feiran thought it over and decided to opt for a more discreet approach. He figured an anonymous letter would handle the situation more softly. *If she doesn't buy it after reading it, I'll figure something else out.*

Lin Feiran went back to the classroom with a new resolve, pulled out a notebook, and began to write. But as "Dear Ms Zheng" took shape, he noticed his cheeks flushing with the effort. Realizing his distinctively poor handwriting would betray his anonymity, he crumpled the note and hid it away, deciding to type and print the letter instead.

After the evening study session, Lin Feiran retreated to his dorm and dove into his phone. His recent chat with the taxi driver had enlightened him on the Yin-yang Eye's limitation on what he could and couldn't reveal. He'd managed to describe the driver's wife and pass along her message without outright saying she was right there in the passenger seat. It was enough for the driver to piece together that his wife's spirit lingered close by. As long as the driver came to that conclusion himself, Lin Feiran was off the hook.

With careful thought, Lin Feiran crafted a message that delicately balanced between revealing too much and too little. He shared the little ghost girl's story with just enough specificity to be believable without being too direct, peppering in personal memories only a mother and daughter would share. Towards the end, he carefully penned the little ghost girl's final wish.

He ended the letter with a heartfelt suggestion: "If there are words left unsaid, speak them into the air around you. They will find their way to her."

With no email address for Ms Zheng, Lin Feiran saved the carefully composed message on his phone after reviewing it one last time.

Lin Feiran stealthily climbed over the school wall fence and made his way to a nearby print shop during lunch break the next day. There, he printed the letter and fashioned an envelope from another sheet of A4 paper with Ms Zheng's name written in big characters on the front.

Seizing the chance in a quiet afternoon during one of the breaks, he slipped the letter under the door of the second-year office, hoping it would reach Ms Zheng.

After that break, Ms Zheng was noticeably absent, missing even the evening study session, where the physics teacher unexpectedly filled in for her. With his Yin-yang Eye active later that evening, Lin Feiran noted the absence of the little ghost girl as well, leading him to speculate that perhaps she had returned home with Ms Zheng.

*Ms Zheng must have read the letter by now...* Lin Feiran mused, pondering over her reaction. *Did she take what I wrote seriously? Kinda seems like she did. She wouldn't just skip evening study duty over a prank, right?*

Lin Feiran felt unusually unsettled that evening, having seen neither the little ghost girl nor Ms Zheng since delivering the letter.

The following day was Lin Feiran's birthday. It fell on a

Wednesday, so he opted for a low-key acknowledgement since he still had plenty of study sessions to attend and the "not allowed to leave school during weekdays" policy. Instead, he planned to celebrate over the weekend with Gu Kaifeng with a good meal and a fun outing. For now, he chose to keep his birthday to himself and not mention it to anyone.

Ms Zheng's English class was scheduled for the second period that morning. As the class was about to start, Lin Feiran couldn't shake off his anxiety about whether she would show up. However, as the bell rang, Ms Zheng walked in, her poise and professional attire as impeccable as ever, and took her place at the front of the classroom.

Surveying the class through her glasses, Ms Zheng paused for a brief moment before starting the lesson in her usual manner. "Good morning, class."

"Good morning, Ms Zheng," Lin Feiran joined in with his classmates. He noticed the slight swelling around her eyes, which suggested she might have spent the night in tears or restlessness.

Eager to learn about the little ghost girl's fate, Lin Feiran chose not to draw on Gu Kaifeng's yang energy. He waited for his Yin-yang Eye to activate, and when the familiar chill enveloped him, he scanned the room and was drawn to a comforting sight at the podium.

There sat the little ghost girl, her chin propped on her hands, elbows resting on her knees, wearing the new hairpin Lin Feiran had offered to her. Catching his eye, she waved and smiled broadly. Her eyes, large and expressive, curved into a charming smile, and her cute, rounded nose perfectly matched the gentle

upward tilt of her mouth. Her once fearsome appearance was now soft and childlike, her face as pristine as porcelain, devoid of any bloodstains.

Lin Feiran realized this transformation confirmed his grandpa's teachings: ghosts burdened with deep attachments often seemed intimidating, but as those ties became weakened or resolved, their true appearance would resurface.

*Clearly, Ms Zheng had taken my letter to heart and said something that helped lessen her daughter's attachment...*

Lin Feiran felt a lump form in his throat. As Ms Zheng turned to the blackboard, Lin Feiran and the little ghost girl shared a warm, secretive smile. Nudging Gu Kaifeng, he silently closed his Yin-yang Eye and refocused on the lesson.

Lin Feiran noticed the little ghost girl lingering by the door during the break, not following Ms Zheng as she usually did but appearing to wait for him instead.

"How's everything going? Has your mom realized you're still with her?" Lin Feiran whispered, covering his mouth with his hand.

The little ghost girl's face lit up with joy, a delicate blush blooming on her pale cheeks. "Mom talked to me a lot yesterday. She's even taking me to the aquarium this weekend," she bubbled over with joy.

"That's fantastic," Lin Feiran responded warmly, his heart light with relief. "Remember, if there's anything you need—toys, snacks, whatever, just let me know."

Her big eyes twinkling, she made a simple request, "Before I move on, I'd really like to have one last ice cream."

"Consider it done!" Lin Feiran declared enthusiastically, "It's on me! "

*Your big brother Ran here is all about generosity!*

He voiced his concerns after reviewing the ritual process. "Though, I should warn you, the ice cream might be a bit melted by the time you get it."

The little ghost girl was usually reserved, her smiles polite and restrained, often no more than a soft grin. But this time, her laughter rang out joyfully. "You're so silly! Ice cream is ice cream, melted or not!" Her gap-toothed smile spread wide across her face.

Lin Feiran returned to the classroom with uplifted spirits and a confident stride brought by the joy of helping out one more ghost. He nudged Gu Kaifeng to turn off his Yin-yang Eye before getting ready for their next Language Arts class, basking in a quiet sense of pride.

It was as if the small badge of good on his chest gleamed a bit brighter.

The day passed by smoothly. After having dinner in the canteen and with some time to spare before evening study, Gu Kaifeng led Lin Feiran to a familiar spot behind the sports field. It was close to where those memorable kisses had taken place just two days earlier. Lin Feiran's cheeks tinged pink at the memory. "What's the plan this time?" He was both curious and a little excited.

Without a word, Gu Kaifeng gracefully climbed over the wall fence, landing neatly on the other side before turning back to Lin Feiran with a smile. "Happy birthday, Ranran."

"...You remembered? I only mentioned it once." Warmth surged through Lin Feiran's heart.

"Of course I remembered. What kind of boyfriend would I be if I didn't?" Gu Kaifeng replied, reaching through the fence to hold Lin Feiran's wrist. "Now, your turn. When's my birthday?"

Without missing a beat, Lin Feiran replied, "16 July."

Gu Kaifeng's smile widened in satisfaction. "I only mentioned it once, too."

Lin Feiran huffed, "I have a good memory."

"Then why does the classics still stump you?" Gu Kaifeng teasingly jabbed.

Lin Feiran immediately shot him a fierce glare!

"Anyway," Lin Feiran started, still puzzled, "why scale the wall just to wish me a happy birthday? You think I'll bite?"

Gu Kaifeng's answer came with a light, carefree whistle. "Hubby's off to grab your birthday cake and presents. I'll be skipping the study session tonight. Meet you at our dorm at 8 p.m. But first, how about giving me a birthday kiss?"

Caught off guard, Lin Feiran attempted to pull away, but Gu Kaifeng's grip on his wrist was firm and gentle. *No escape.*

"Or, you could just lean in, and I'll do the kissing," Gu Kaifeng proposed, suggesting a compromise.

Lin Feiran's cheeks flushed with heat, his gaze shyly dropping as his long eyelashes cast captivating shadows over his cheeks, further ensnaring Gu Kaifeng's desire. Spurred on by a playful impulse, Gu Kaifeng tightened his grip. With a mischievous grin, he taunted, "If you don't let me kiss you, I might just hold onto your hand through the entire study session."

"You..." Lin Feiran's protest was a whisper, barely audible. Then, he reluctantly turned and pressed his cheek against the cool metal of the fence in reply.

Gu Kaifeng planted a tender kiss on Lin Feiran's cheek through the gaps in the fence. Yearning for more, he murmured, "I want to kiss your lips as well."

With a moment's hesitation, Lin Feiran adjusted his position, allowing their lips to meet through the narrow opening of the railing gaps. Gu Kaifeng's grip was gentle, yet it firmly discouraged any retreat. His other hand snaked through another gap in the fence to tenderly stroke Lin Feiran's hair and graze his ear, which was now glowing red in embarrassment.

Amidst the cool breeze that whispered through the trees and swept the last few autumn leaves, a single yellow leaf fluttered past Lin Feiran's shoulder, slipped through the fence and drifted past Gu Kaifeng's waist, as if carrying their sweet secret away along with the changing seasons.

Lin Feiran went back to class and informed the evening study supervisor that Gu Kaifeng was suddenly feeling unwell. Despite Gu Kaifeng's history as a freshman troublemaker, his improved demeanour and strong academic performance softened the teachers' attitudes toward him. They generally gave him the benefit of the doubt. The teacher simply asked Lin Feiran to make sure Gu Kaifeng asked for an official absence note from Ms Zheng the following day.

Caught up in thoughts of the birthday surprise awaiting him, Lin Feiran found himself daydreaming through the evening's study sessions, his mind far removed from the workbooks in front of him. When the final bell signalled dismissal, he hastily

grabbed one of Gu Kaifeng's pens and darted out of the classroom to the dorm.

He left his classmates in the dust as he sprinted. The path to the dormitory was even more deserted and eerily quiet when he was alone. It was a scenario that would have made him nervous just a few days before, even if his Yin-yang Eye hadn't revealed the unseen. However, the suspense of anticipation for what awaited him with Gu Kaifeng eclipsed any sense of fear. Imagining the warm light coming through the window of their dormitory was like basking in a surge of yang energy, filling him with courage.

*—To him, that person wasn't just a yang energy shield. He was his greatest source of courage.*

Lin Feiran was out of breath by the time he reached the dorm building, but he willfully hurried up to the fifth floor. The door to room 508 was invitingly open, and Gu Kaifeng stood just at the entrance, bathed in the soft light from the room. The mix of light and shadow from the room and the corridor accentuated his features, and his hair shone with a soft glow.

Striving to appear composed, Lin Feiran slowed his breakneck pace to a more measured walk as he neared, feigning nonchalance as though he hadn't just rushed there like there was no tomorrow.

Gu Kaifeng greeted him with a radiant smile. "In a hurry, honey?"

Out of breath, Lin Feiran managed to respond, "No... Wasn't rushing..." as he stepped into the room.

His eyes lit up at the sight before him. Gu Kaifeng had pushed their study desks together to create a makeshift celebra-

tion table at the room's centre. It was beautifully set with a delicate cake box, a satin-wrapped gift, and an elaborate bouquet of lilies with a letter in the middle.

Lin Feiran's face broke into a smile of pure joy at the surprise.

"Happy birthday," Gu Kaifeng murmured, wrapping his arms around Lin Feiran from behind and whispering in his ear, "My little prince."

Caught in the moment, Lin Feiran grabbed Gu Kaifeng's hand at his waist and had the urge to turn around for a kiss, but a sudden shyness held him back. As he hesitated, Gu Kaifeng stepped away and, with a gentle smile, offered him the gift box. "Open it. I promise you'll love what's inside."

"Okay." With a quick, longing look at Gu Kaifeng's lips, Lin Feiran excitedly unwrapped the gift. His heart leapt at the sight of a shoebox with a familiar logo. Inside was a pair of limited-edition basketball sneakers, matching the ones Gu Kaifeng owned and had long been sold out. Lin Feiran had long coveted those shoes, his envy palpable each time Gu Kaifeng wore them, catching himself casting dozens of longing glances their way throughout the day.

"Do you like them?" Gu Kaifeng watched him intently for his reaction.

Lin Feiran, overwhelmed by emotion, remained silent, fearing his voice would betray the tumultuous feelings within him. He merely pressed his lips together and nodded, his eyes shimmering with unshed tears, a testament to his joy and gratitude.

Gu Kaifeng, noticing Lin Feiran's reaction, hastened to add, "It wasn't easy finding these. They weren't available for resale locally." He worried that Lin Feiran would mind that the gift

was a second-hand item. "But I found a collector abroad who assured me they were brand new. It looks new to me."

Lin Feiran's gaze, brightened by a film of tears, lingered on the shoes and touched them with the care one would to a fragile treasure. After a moment, he gathered his composure and asked quietly. "How did you know I would like it?"

Gu Kaifeng chuckled. "I saw the way you looked at me whenever I wore mine—like you couldn't get enough."

Lin Feiran blushed, "Was I that obvious?"

"Your face gives you away every time," Gu Kaifeng teased, giving Lin Feiran's cheek a playful squeeze before pulling out his own pair of matching sneakers. "Try them on. Let's twin."

"Yeah!" Lin Feiran nodded vigorously.

In his eagerness to keep the sought-after sneakers in mint condition, Lin Feiran, who usually bragged that his socks could remain fresh for days, opted for a brand-new pair for this special occasion. Side by side, he and Gu Kaifeng, in near-perfect unison, slipped their feet into their matching sneakers.

Testing the feel of his new footwear with several eager bounces, Lin Feiran noticed Gu Kaifeng mimicking his every move. When Lin Feiran paused to admire the sneakers, Gu Kaifeng did the same and lifted his foot.

The playful imitation sparked laughter from Lin Feiran, though his amusement was tinged with concern about the cost. "These must've cost a fortune, right?"

Adopting an exaggeratedly pained expression, Gu Kaifeng half-jokingly moaned, "That seller knew these were nowhere else to be found and hiked up the price. There goes my entire month's allowance."

Extremely touched, Lin Feiran clapped him on the shoulder and declared, "I've got your back for daily expenses this month!"

Gu Kaifeng, catching Lin Feiran's hand, gave it a playful squeeze. "Don't worry about me. I've got savings from the last few months still saved up."

Lin Feiran was momentarily speechless.

Although he came from a decent family, Lin Feiran was not given much to spend so freely. Acquiring such a coveted pair on his allowance would mean tightening his belt for months. This generosity underscored Gu Kaifeng's affection towards him.

*He was such a good guy. What a fool I had been to squabble with him over trivial matters before. I might never have realized just how remarkable he was without the whole Yin-yang Eye accident...* Knocked down by sugar-coated bullets, Lin Feiran felt a pang of regret.

"I was going to go with red roses at first, but then I thought lilies would suit you better." Gu Kaifeng explained as he stood, gracefully placing the bouquet into Lin Feiran's arms. The white lilies cast a radiant glow against Lin Feiran's fair skin.

White lilies have many meanings, one of which is "pure love".

Holding the bouquet, Lin Feiran couldn't resist a playful thought: *Gu Kaifeng's idea of love is hardly "pure"... probably a bit more on the dirty side!*

"Is this from you?" Lin Feiran asked, pulling the letter from the bouquet. He carefully opened the envelope and unfolded it—a love letter.

The letter was penned in Gu Kaifeng's unmistakable handwriting—strikingly sharp and robust, yet filled with unexpected tenderness, especially noticeable with the choice of pink ink.

While the colour initially seemed at odds with the handwriting's boldness, it soon revealed a charming contrast against the white paper, highlighting the heartfelt words.

Addressed affectionately "To little sticky rice cake Lin Feiran" at the top left and signed "From your dearest desk mate, Gu Kaifeng" at the bottom right, the letter echoed the profound declaration of love Gu Kaifeng had voiced just days before in their dorm. It went even further, lavishing praise on Lin Feiran in a manner that was both grand and intimate. Reading each word, Lin Feiran's smile widened, his face alight with joy, each line drawing a deeper shade of red across his cheeks.

"Remember how I said this ink colour was perfect for love letters?" Gu Kaifeng said, his tone light and teasing.

"Yeah," Lin Feiran acknowledged, glancing towards his backpack with a hint of embarrassment. "I... uh, kept that 'love letter' you wrote back then. The one when you were testing the ink."

"Really?" Gu Kaifeng's eyes lit up with mischief.

"Well, I just forgot to throw it away," Lin Feiran hastily clarified, pulling out the slightly creased and worn "love letter" from his backpack's side pocket. It had been folded and unfolded many times, and bore the marks of its tenure in the depths of his bag. He unfolded it and gently placed the simple "greeting and signature" love letter atop today's heartfelt one. Then, he folded them together and secured them back in the envelope.

Gu Kaifeng's gaze never wavered, fixed on Lin Feiran with an intensity brimming with anticipation, his eyes shining with an eagerness reminiscent of a puppy waiting for a treat.

"Why are you staring at me like that?" Lin Feiran asked, a

flutter of nervousness in his voice as he tucked the envelope safely into his desk drawer, keenly aware of Gu Kaifeng's intense gaze. He instinctively put up his guard, almost as if he felt the need to shield his butt!

Gu Kaifeng, momentarily caught in the thrill of Lin Feiran's playful actions, regained his composure and, with a hint of ceremony, opened the birthday cake box to reveal the last of his surprises.

The cake was an artistic marvel: a two-tiered creation topped with a fondant figure of a dapper little boy, unmistakably modelled after Lin Feiran, seated at a piano. The scene was set against cream-crafted crimson curtains, lending a dramatic flair to the stage performance. The figure sported a crown, rendering him every inch the prince. In front of the piano, a strip of white chocolate carried the endearing inscription, "Ranran, My Little Prince, Happy Birthday", penned with dark chocolate source.

"This is you." Gu Kaifeng pointed at the fondant figure.

Lin Feiran was almost dizzy from the barrage of surprises. His eyes sparkled as he asked, "But where are you in this scene?"

"Me?" Gu Kaifeng chuckled, pointing to the piano stool beneath the fondant Lin Feiran. "I'm right there, under your butt."

Lin Feiran couldn't hold in his laughter, flashing a set of pearly whites.

Observing him, Gu Kaifeng let out a sigh of satisfaction. "Perfect."

For a brief moment, Lin Feiran found himself speechless.

Gu Kaifeng carefully arranged the correct number of candles on the cake and lit them with precision. Then, the musically challenged charmer, Mr Gu, set out to serenade his boyfriend.

"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday..."

His rendition of "Happy Birthday" was, to put it mildly, unconventional.

He called it singing, but the melody was nowhere to be found! He claimed to clap a beat, yet his timing was consistently off!

Lin Feiran couldn't contain his laughter at all, and it erupted despite his best efforts at being polite. *Gu Kaifeng might have just become the world's first to rap the "Happy Birthday" song.*

Undeterred by Lin Feiran's laughter, Gu Kaifeng upped his performance, his enthusiastic "Happy birthday to you, oh, oh, oh—" filling the room with infectious joy.

Their laughter intertwined as Lin Feiran made his wish and blew out the candles. "Honey, let's cut the cake," Gu Kaifeng declared, presenting Lin Feiran with a serrated knife.

But Lin Feiran had a different plan in mind. He set the knife aside, placed a hand on Gu Kaifeng's shoulder, and coaxed him to sit down. With a mix of determination and a hint of shyness in his eyes, Lin Feiran asked, "Can you close your eyes for me?" His voice was as soft as the breeze.

Without hesitation, Gu Kaifeng complied, closing his eyes.

Lin Feiran, however, paused and fiddled with the hem of his shirt, his voice trembling slightly. "Maybe... maybe keep your eyes open. It might be more... fitting."

A knowing smile played on Gu Kaifeng's lips as he reopened his eyes, meeting Lin Feiran's gaze with a steady, reassuring look.

Moments later, Lin Feiran's resolve faltered. "Actually, no, I can't do this. Close them again," he quickly amended, his cheeks flushing with nervous warmth.

Gu Kaifeng obliged, shutting his eyes once again. His breathing quickened in anticipation of Lin Feiran's next move.

Swallowing hard, Lin Feiran made a bold move as he took hold of Gu Kaifeng's chin, lifting it so suddenly that it seemed he was aiming to break it instead. This left Gu Kaifeng's neck craning at a peculiar angle. Realizing the angle was a bit too sharp, Lin Feiran adjusted softly, finding the right tilt. Closing the distance between them, Lin Feiran leaned in for a kiss that, despite its clumsiness, was charged with genuine emotion.

As their lips met, Gu Kaifeng responded with intense passion, pulling Lin Feiran into his embrace. The shift in balance caused Lin Feiran to straddle his lap. Gu Kaifeng held Lin Feiran by the waist with one hand and cradled the back of his neck with the other, tilting his head to deepen their kiss. He devoured Lin Feiran's lips and tongue with fervour, occasionally gently nibbling, eliciting soft moans from Lin Feiran.

The kiss left Gu Kaifeng unsatiated, notably because it was Lin Feiran who initiated it for the first time. The intensity of the moment left Lin Feiran breathless, his initial boldness melting away under Gu Kaifeng's tender yet passionate response.

"I need to talk to you... uh... what was that?" Lin Feiran gasped out the words as they broke their kiss, catching his breath and trying to gather his scattered thoughts. After pulling himself together, he playful poked Gu Kaifeng's chest to draw his full attention. "Gu Kaifeng."

With a gentle acknowledgement, Gu Kaifeng responded, "Yes, your Majesty."

Lin Feiran, regaining some of his composure, teasingly accused, "You made me gay."

"But you are..." Gu Kaifeng started, intending to clarify.

Lin Feiran quickly interjected. "I was straight!"

Gu Kaifeng quickly agreed, "Okay, okay. You were straight."

Listing off milestones with his fingers, Lin Feiran said, "My first love, first time holding hands, first time sharing a bed, first kiss, second kiss, third kiss... They're all with you."

Gu Kaifeng smiled, warmth in his voice. "Me too." He paused before adding, "Don't forget our first night. I am waiting for it after graduating from high school."

"Can't you be serious for a minute?" Lin Feiran, half-amused, half-exasperated, pinched Gu Kaifeng's cheek, emphasizing, "You need to take responsibility! If you run away after turning me gay, I'll... I'll..."

"That's never going to happen." Gu Kaifeng cut in, burying his face in Lin Feiran's chest. He inhaled deeply, the milk and honey scent of Lin Feiain's skin comforting him, and he declared with conviction, "I'm yours for life. Don't you even think about running away."

Lin Feiran gave an agreeing nod. "Good, mark your words!"

Gu Kaifeng bit a button on Lin Feiran's shirt, "If you dare run, I'll chase you, barking the whole time until I take a big chomp of your butt when I catch you."

The brazenness in Gu Kaifeng's words was so fitting for Gu Kai-Crazy! Lin Feiran couldn't help but burst into laughter with that thought.

"Ranran, do you finally acknowledge me as your boyfriend?" Gu Kaifeng took the moment to press for confirmation.

A bit sheepish, Lin Feiran touched his nose, admitting softly, "...Yeah."

With a hint of playfulness, Gu Kaifeng suggested, "Shouldn't we mark our first official day as a couple with something special?"

A mischievous glint appeared in Lin Feiran's eyes. "In that case... close your eyes again."

Eagerly, Gu Kaifeng complied, his lips puckered in anticipation.

However, Lin Feiran, sporting a sly smile, scooped up a handful of whipped cream and smeared it on Gu Kaifeng's face!

"Is this how you want to play?" Gu Kaifeng took a moment to recover from the surprise before springing into action. He lifted Lin Feiran up and tumbled him onto the lower bunk. Pinning him down before Lin Feiran could respond, he took a bit of the cream from his own face and, feigning severity but with a soft touch, dabbed it onto Lin Feiran's nose and kissed the cream away.

"Hahaha, take that, a cream facial!" Lin Feiran burst into laughter, playfully smearing the dollop of cream across Gu Kaifeng's face. Gu Kaifeng indulged him, all while sneaking his hand around Lin Feiran's waist.

When he entered their room, Lin Feiran had taken off his jacket. Now, he was just in a beige sweater vest over a neatly buttoned white shirt, his tie perfectly knotted—a crafty obstacle. Seizing the moment as Lin Feiran was busy teasing him, Gu Kaifeng took his chance. He tugged Lin Feiran's shirt from his trousers and, with a swift move, lifted the fabric to Lin Feiran's chin, then cheekily rubbed his cream-daubed face against Lin Feiran's smooth chest.

"Hey! That's cheating! You're not supposed to get it on my

body!" Lin Feiran protested, realizing too late he was at a disadvantage. He wriggled around, trying to get off the bed, but found himself firmly pinned down.

"Trying to run sway?" Gu Kaifeng's voice was playful as he grabbed Lin Feiran's wrist. His cream-smeared face hovered close to Lin Feiran's lips in a suggestive tone, "How about cleaning it up for me, babe?"

Lin Feiran bit his lip, laughing shyly. "Are you even clean? I don't want to end up eating soap," he said with a bashful tone.

"All clean, I promise." Gu Kaifeng flashed a grin that could rival any toothpaste commercial, his teeth a striking contrast to the mischief in his eyes. "Brushed, washed, and even spritzed on some cologne. Can't you tell?"

Indeed, Lin Feiran had noticed a subtle fragrance when he first stepped into the room, but the whirlwind of gifts and surprises had left little room for anything else. Touched by Gu Kaifeng's thoughtful preparations, affection swelled within him. Like a kitten, he leaned forward and gave a tentative lick to Gu Kaifeng's chin, the taste of cream mingling with the faint scent of cologne. Flushing with a mix of embarrassment and surprise at his own boldness, he then drifted to the corners of Gu Kaifeng's mouth. Just as he was about to continue, Gu Kaifeng caught up in the moment, leaned in to kiss Lin Feiran's chest, claiming to wipe away the cream in a passionate gesture. The air around them became charged with a sweet, intoxicating warmth.

"Enough already, stop kissing! I'm clean, okay? Stop, Gu Kaifeng!" Lin Feiran flailed on the bed, chest heaving and heart thudding with excitement. Caught between alarm and the

thrill of unexpected pleasure, he tried to break free of his lust. His protests, however, were hardly a match for Gu Kaifeng's strength. Left with no choice, he sternly shouted, "Gu! Kai! Feng!"

At Lin Feiran's genuine distress, Gu Kaifeng paused. His tongue swiped over his lips, a hint of longing lingering as he caught his breath. With a playful yet panting remark, he said, "I wish I could just spread the cream all over you and take my time to lick it clean, bit by bit."

Lin Feiran blushed at the thought, a wave of warmth surging through him at the thought of Gu Kaifeng licking all over him. However, in a great effort to maintain his composed façade as an aloof little prince, he retorted, "Where did you put your brain today?"

Gu Kaifeng, tapping his temple thoughtfully, kept a straight face as he replied, "In here busy conjuring up 108 ways to adore my little sticky rice cake."

Rolling his eyes, Lin Feiran reached for a few tissues from the box beside the bed to wipe his chest and tossed another to Gu Kaifeng for his face. With the mischief now on pause, Gu Kaifeng loosened his hold. Lin Feiran quickly hopped off the bed and declared, "Let's have some cake."

He removed the birthday candles and sliced the cake, serving up a piece for both himself and Gu Kaifeng. With plenty left over, he suggested, "How about we share the rest with the others?"

They took the cake to Wang Zhuo's room, where they found He Hao engrossed in a book on the lower bunk. Wang Zhuo, ever the energetic one, swung down from his upper bunk with a

dramatic flair at the sight of them. "Cake! What are we celebrating?"

Without missing a beat, Gu Kaifeng replied, "Your saozi's birthday. Who else?"

"Oh, happy birthday, Saozi! May you be blessed with prosperity and peace!" Wang Zhuo exclaimed, theatrically bowing like a maid greeting her majesty.

He Hao first glanced at the cheeky Wang Zhuo, then looked up to offer a simple but sincere "Happy birthday".

With cheeks flushed, Lin Feiran thanked them and placed the cake on the table.

Wang Zhuo, unable to resist a tease, quipped, "So you two are official now?"

Lin Feiran remained silent, unsure whether Wang Zhuo actually knew Gu Kaifeng was gay or if he was just kidding around. Meanwhile, Wang Zhuo, with a satisfied "Ah," wolfed down a huge chunk of cake before eagerly stabbing into another piece with the same fork for He Hao, "You gotta try this, He Ritian. It's super fluffy and delicious."[18]

He Hao, nicknamed He Ritian by Wang Zhuo, silently obliged and accepted the treat without a word.

After savouring another piece himself, Wang Zhuo attempted to feed He Hao once more. He Hao accepted the second

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18 He Ritian: He Hao's first name is 昊 (hao), this Chinese word combines with two words. 日 (ri) is on top and 天 (tian) at the bottom, that's why He Hao's nickname is He Ritian. The meaning of 日 (ri) is sun, and 日 (ri) is also used in spoken mandarin as "fuck". The meaning of 天 (tian) is sky or world ( 天下 ), so "Ritian" is "fuck the world".

mouthful but politely declined the next offering. "Sweets aren't really my thing."

"No worries! I can't get enough of them. I'll happily finish what's left," Wang Zhuo said, the fork still hanging from his lips. He then turned to Lin Feiran with a grateful nod, "This is fantastic, thank you! I owe you a belated birthday gift, saozi."

Lin Feiran, now accustomed to being called "Saozi", quickly responded, "It's fine. No need for any trouble."

After making their rounds and sharing the cake with other dormitories, Gu Kaifeng and Lin Feiran retreated to their own room. Curiosity bubbling up, Lin Feiran inquired, "Did Wang Zhuo actually pick up on your feelings for me, or was he just playing around?"

Gu Kaifeng stroked his chin in thought. "I never told him outright, but it seems he's put the pieces together on his own. His teasing probably was his way of supporting me. For all his quirks, he's quite insightful."

Acknowledging this, Lin Feiran set about clearing his desk and pulling out his workbook. Catching Gu Kaifeng's gaze, he felt a warm flush at the realization: *this man is really my boyfriend now*. His voice softened at this thought. "Should we... start on our homework?"

Gu Kaifeng raised an eyebrow, a hint of amusement in his voice. "On our first official day as a couple and your birthday. And we're gonna do homework?"

Lin Feiran stood up, meticulously tucking his shirt back into his trousers, "What other options do we have? It's not like we can head out for a night."

Gu Kaifeng stepped closer, wrapping his arms around Lin

Feiran from behind. With some playful caresses, he whispered suggestively, "We could have some fun exploring each other's bodies and copy someone else's homework later. Sounds good?"

Though tempted by the idea, Lin Feiran hesitated, mindful of their freshly minted relationship status. Gu Kaifeng, known for pushing boundaries, had already taken liberties with Lin Feiran's reserved indulgence. Given more leeway, who knows what his next move would be? Blushing deeply, Lin Feiran gently elbowed Gu Kaifeng away. "I've just made my birthday wish. It wouldn't feel right to ignore it so soon, would it?"

Gu Kaifeng chuckled, his tone light. "And what was this wish that has you so solemn?"

Barely above a whisper, Lin Feiran shared, "I wished for both of us to study in the school of engineering at the University of Songzhou."

The University of Songzhou stood as the pinnacle of academia in their region. While challenging, it wasn't an impossible dream with their capabilities and dedication.

At Lin Feiran's admission, Gu Kaifeng's heart swelled. "Have you started picturing us living in an apartment together for college?"

"Mm," Lin Feiran replied, then hastily clarified, "But only because I want a cat, alright?"

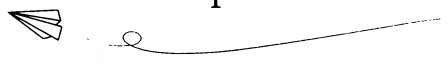
Gu Kaifeng responded with a loud, affectionate kiss on Lin Feiran's cheek, then grabbed his backpack and settled at the study desk. "Alright, let's get started right away. For the two of us to live in that dream apartment near the University of Songzhou in the future!"

Lin Feiran, slightly annoyed yet amused, corrected him, "It's

about getting into the University of Songzhou for our future careers, not just living together!"

*All Gu Kaifeng ever thinks about is living together! Maybe I should reconsider having him as a boyfriend!*

# Chapter 14



Dawn arrived the next day just like any other. After breakfast, Gu Kaifeng and Lin Feiran made their way to the academic building. The path, bordered by neatly trimmed shrubs and filled with groups of students hurrying to class, felt familiar yet entirely different from yesterday. The crisp winter air, once biting, felt like warmth to Lin Feiran as he walked close to Gu Kaifeng. Each accidental brush of their shoulders sent a flame through him, transforming the chilly breeze into something tender.

With his hands buried in his pockets, Lin Feiran found himself stealing glances at Gu Kaifeng as they walked. The birthday celebration the previous evening had filled him with astonishment and happiness. He had recognized his feelings for Gu Kaifeng for some time, but the sudden shift to being a couple caught him off guard. He was awake until late at night, torn between wonder and concern, marvelling at how naturally he had accepted a man as his lover and replaying every moment that led

them here, his heart felt like a flower in bloom.

His mind was abuzz with the thought, "Gu Kaifeng is now officially my boyfriend." Despite the fatigue clinging to him, the thrill of this realization made sleep seem almost unnecessary. He knew Gu Kaifeng had also tossed and turned, yet in the morning, despite their bleary eyes, a single glance at each other was enough to ignite sparks of energy for both.

*How had I never noticed Gu Kaifeng's allure before?* Lin Feiran's eyes were inexorably drawn back to him.

"What are you looking at, babe?" Gu Kaifeng asked teasingly. He turned to Lin Feiran, an affectionate glint in his eyes.

Lin Feiran had a watchful gaze on him ever since he had woken up, cautious and eager, much like a hamster on the prowl to jump a big cat.

"N-Nothing..." Lin Feiran's initial denial was automatic, but then he paused, realizing there was no longer a need for such pretence. After all, they were a couple now. Gathering his courage, he confidently retorted, "Just admiring my boyfriend. Is there something wrong with that?"

The admission sent a wave of embarrassment through Lin Feiran, and his cheeks burned.

Gu Kaifeng, thrilled by the unexpected flirting, pressed on, "Really? And what do you think? Is your boyfriend handsome?"

"Absolutely!" Lin Feiran's tail stood up in pride. "He has good taste, after all."

Gu Kaifeng felt a surge of affection and longed to cover Lin Feiran with kisses in a secluded spot. Since they were in public, he opted for a playful gesture instead and gently tugged at Lin Feiran's earlobe.

It sent Lin Feiran's initial boldness retreating in an instant. He covered his ear, blushing, and backed away like a startled bunny. This reaction only spurred Gu Kaifeng to advance again, turning their interaction into a playful chase. Despite his longer strides, Gu Kaifeng deliberately stayed just a step behind Lin Feiran, allowing him to keep a narrow lead. Their laughter filled the air as they raced towards the classroom, reaching it just as the bell rang. Their lively spirit and open happiness attracted amused glances from those they passed by. Very obviously a "bromance" of them.

After three consecutive classes, Lin Feiran's hand throbbed from relentless note-taking. With the daunting prospect of Language Arts class next, he sighed, setting down his pen to stretch and rub his neck during the break.

"Feeling tired?" Gu Kaifeng inquired, his voice now had a quickening effect on Lin Feiran's heartbeat since their relationship changed the night before.

Trying to sound nonchalant, Lin Feiran replied, "Somewhat."

"I can help with that." Gu Kaifeng's warm hand reached Lin Feiran's neck, and his fingers gently worked beneath the collar to massage the tense muscles. Lin Feiran almost tingled at the sudden contact, instinctively wanting to pull away. However, Gu Kaifeng's soothing voice stopped him. "I'm targeting the Jianzhongyu acupuncture point. It's known to relieve fatigue."

Not wanting to appear like someone only thinking with his dick, Lin Feiran relaxed and managed an awkward "Oh."

"And this one on your neck is the Bailao acupoint," Gu Kaifeng continued, his tone was cool in contrast to the warmth of

his hand. He massaged Lin Feiran's shoulder and neck for a bit before taking Lin Feiran's hand and gently massaging his wrist. "This is the Neiguan acupoint. It's also good for relieving fatigue. Maybe you can try it on me sometime."

By then, Lin Feiran's cheeks became even more flushed. Yet, he responded with sincerity. "Sure, I will."

Gu Kaifeng kept up the massage as the back of the room offered them a bit of privacy. His hand wandered under Lin Feiran's jacket, pushing the sweater aside to caress Lin Feiran's lower back through the thin fabric of his shirt. Dropping his previously restrained manner, he flirted, "I am hitting the Yaoyan acupoint now. Feeling good?" As he said this, his fingers daringly moved past the belt, inching into Lin Feiran's pants. Lin Feiran, caught off guard, felt Gu Kaifeng's hand pause at the edge of his underwear. With a bold grin, Gu Kaifeng teased shamelessly, "And y'know what other place down there feels good with a massage?"

Suddenly realised what he was referring to, Lin Feiran's mind went blank. He quickly reached back and stopped Gu Kaifeng's adventurous hand. He shot Gu Kaifeng a glare, "Stop that."

Gu Kaifeng laughed softly, pulling his hand back as he admitted, "I just want to touch you."

Lin Feiran bit back a smile. "I knew it!"

*So much for acupoints and massages—those were all just excuses!*

Gu Kaifeng blinked innocently. "Isn't it just a matter of time? Let me find the right *point* to massage first."

*This really takes the cake for shamelessness!*

"I have no idea what you're going on about." Lin Feiran

opened his workbook for Language Arts and pretended to focus on reading, though his thoughts were consumed by unspeakable scenarios with Gu Kaifeng.

*Oh my god, just thinking about the pain!* Aware of how intimacy works between gay couples, Lin Feiran couldn't help but worry. *Man, would I have to give up my beloved spicy dishes once I became an adult?*

"No idea? Then why do you look so flustered?" Gu Kaifeng continued to tease as he playfully tapped Lin Feiran's butt.

"Which eye of yours saw me blush?" Lin Feiran shot back, his cheeks warming as he moved his chair to the aisle. The loud scrape of the chair against the floor echoed through the classroom, and curious heads turned to look.

*Keeping a distance of more than a metre is crucial when dating someone as mischievous as Gu Kaifeng!*

Absorbing yang energy had become so much easier for Lin Feiran since they officially became a couple. With Gu Kaifeng as his boyfriend, casual touches were frequent and seemingly innocent. However, Lin Feiran did not realize he was nearing the limit of Gu Kaifeng's self-control. Despite how easy it was to obtain yang energy, he still continued his Yin-yang Eye training. Thankfully, he hadn't come across any malevolent spirits since acquiring this ability. The ghosts, though daunting in appearance, presented no real danger, and Lin Feiran found himself becoming more comfortable with their presence.

He often thought back to his grandpa's advice during his last visit to the ancestral house, emphasizing that true strength lay in self-reliance. Relying on someone else's yang energy for protection wasn't a permanent solution.

Reflecting on those words now, Lin Feiran couldn't shake the feeling that they had indeed become realities!

Lin Feiran wasn't concerned about losing his source of yang energy if they ever parted ways. Instead, his encounter with the little ghost girl inspired a newfound purpose for his Yin-yang Eye: to aid restless ghosts. He realized that he couldn't help if he remained fearful of them. Recently, he had seen the little ghost girl several times. Maybe it was just his perception, but she seemed more ethereal, her figure became more transparent with each sighting. Lin Feiran suspected this indicated her attachments were gradually loosening, and she was on her journey to reincarnation.

Saturday rolled around, and with the afternoon classes behind them, Lin Feiran led Gu Kaifeng—who had been the subject of relentless teasing since becoming his boyfriend—out of the classroom. They headed to the sports equipment storeroom on the first floor. Checking to make sure they were alone, Lin Feiran quickly cracked the door open, pulled Gu Kaifeng inside, and then leaned against it to close it.

Rumour had it, thanks to a tip from the math class representative, that their math teacher was planning a surprise quiz for the next two study sessions. The kind that would be ranked according to results.

*All I need is a bit more yang energy to sharpen my focus for the quiz. That's all.*

*Watching Gu Kaifeng solve problems on the blackboard in the last class was captivating. His solutions were quick, his handwriting had flair, and there was even a confident swagger in his step. It*

*really made me want to steal a kiss.*

Lin Feiran found himself torn between the devil and angel on his shoulders!

Catching Gu Kaifeng's gaze, Lin Feiran gave a pensive look.

"Nobody's going to walk in, right?" Lin Feiran asked, nervously scratching his nose and looking away.

But before he could worry further, Gu Kaifeng's lips were on his, one hand steadying the door and the other tenderly cupping Lin Feiran's face. Lin Feiran melted into the kiss, his lips parting in invitation, eyes fluttering shut as a soft sigh escaped him. That sigh seemed to ignite something in Gu Kaifeng, who then gently loosened Lin Feiran's tie and undid a few buttons of his shirt, leaving delicate love bites along the graceful line of Lin Feiran's collarbone.

"We should stop... there's a math quiz next class..." Lin Feiran, now buzzing with energy, whispered, nudging Gu Kaifeng back.

Catching his breath, Gu Kaifeng carefully redid Lin Feiran's buttons and fixed his tie, his gaze fierce yet tender. "These marks are just for me to see." He pointed to the spot where those love bites were, gaze as sharp as a wolf's.

Lin Feiran nodded. "Of course. Who else would I show them to?"

A proud smile played on Gu Kaifeng's lips, and his possessiveness subsided. He affectionately tousled Lin Feiran's hair. "Let's head back to class."

To Lin Feiran, Gu Kaifeng almost seemed like a protective wolf-dog wagging its tail.

After acing their math quiz, Lin Feiran and Gu Kaifeng were

buzzing with the excitement of the upcoming weekend. After packing up in their dorm, they made their way to the school gate. Lin Feiran was bubbling over with ideas for their day out, while Gu Kaifeng, casually slinging his backpack over one shoulder, tucked his hands in his pockets, listened and nodded. His affection for Lin Feiran was clear in his gentle gaze.

"I'll grab us a taxi," Gu Kaifeng declared upon reaching the gate. Fishing through his bag yielded no phone, and a thorough pat-down of his pockets was equally fruitless. "Must have left it back in the dorm. I'll be right back."

With a quick turn, Gu Kaifeng sprinted back toward the dormitory. Left at the gate, Lin Feiran was undeterred, eagerly mapping out their day. They would start with hotpot at their favourite restaurant, followed by the latest movie of a beloved sci-fi series. Of course, he'd already snagged tickets for it a while ago. He couldn't forget the popcorn, opting for the salty cheese flavour Gu Kaifeng preferred over sweet caramel...

As he planned for their perfect day, Lin Feiran felt the resurgence of the yin energy he'd kept at bay through the earlier math quiz sessions. Surrounded by fellow students and bathed in the sun's warm, orange glow, Lin Feiran felt a sense of calm rather than fear. His eyes wandered to the path leading to the dormitory, eagerly awaiting Gu Kaifeng's return.

However, it wasn't Gu Kaifeng who approached, but an all-too-familiar presence: the half-headed Old Principal.

Lin Feiran barely recognized Old Principal this time as he seemed utterly transformed. His head was firmly in place, showing no signs of damage or distress, and his face lacked any indication of injury or the ghostly pallor of death. Apart from

a faint, otherworldly glow, he appeared almost as if he were still among the living.

"Huh?" Lin Feiran watched in astonishment, wondering whether Old Principal had let go of his attachments like the little ghost girl had.

Lin Feiran quickly dismissed the thought. The look on Old Principal's face was not one of relief but intense anger instead, as if on the verge of exploding. His once respectable features were now contorted with fury. In the middle of his stride, he abruptly turned towards the school gate, stopping close to Lin Feiran. He extended his arms as if to snatch someone back and shield that person behind him. His chest rose and fell heavily as he spoke a series of words in foreign languages, his tone imbued with fervent indignation.

Old Principal's actions were eerily real, although there was nothing around him but air and regular students...

Confused, Lin Feiran couldn't understand the scene unfolding in front of him.

Suddenly, Old Principal was roaring furiously, lunged as if fighting an unseen foe. Soon, he was subdued, likely due to his age. He was breathing heavily and frozen in place as if restrained by invisible forces. Yet, his gaze remained sharp and determined. At that moment, a cold gleam flashed above him, and with a soft crunch, half of his head tumbled to the ground, his expression still defiant. His eye, filled with undying rage, stared down his unseen adversary.

Even in death, he stood firm, like a weathered, unbreakable tree...

Moments later, his rage dissipated, and his usual stern demea-

nour returned. With half of his head missing, he turned and walked into the school, hands clasped behind him as if resuming his usual patrol.

*Was this a re-enactment of his death?*

As Lin Feiran pieced together the eerie occurrence, a realization dawned on him. This was the first time he had used his Yin-yang Eye at this particular time and place. Even if Old Principal had been re-enacting his moment of death every day at the school gate, Lin Feiran certainly wouldn't have witnessed it before.

Lost in contemplation, Lin Feiran replayed the haunting scene in his mind. The foreign language Old Principal spoke was unfamiliar yet somehow recognizable as that of the neighbouring country. Perhaps it was a historical conflict. The invasion by the neighbouring country years back suggested that the Old Principal might have met his end by protecting his students during those tumultuous times. This epiphany sent Lin Feiran's heart racing.

Previously, Old Principal had been the ghost Lin Feiran feared the most. His daunting presence and strict discipline had always been intimidating. Lin Feiran had been caught a few times either daydreaming or sneaking glances at his phone during class and had to suffer through Old Principal's rebukes and even some "physical" discipline. Facing a ghost with only half a head was far from pleasant. Yet now...

Lin Feiran hurried over to Old Principal, feigning a cough and covering his mouth. He glanced down and tentatively called out, "Sir?"

Old Principal halted, his half-head turned to look at Lin Fei-

ran.

Summoning all his bravery, Lin Feiran looked up at this venerable gentleman. With a voice trembling with nervousness, he asked, "Sir, do you have any last wishes I could assist with?"

However, Old Principal cut him off, furrowing his brow in disapproval. "You again? Shouldn't you be hitting the books instead of loafing around here?"

Finding himself on the receiving end of Old Principal's scolding once more, Lin Feiran nearly gasped. Worried he might not have been understood, Lin Feiran attempted to clarify his intent once again.

But Old Principal was puzzled by Lin Feiran's question and chided, "Have you completed the assignment? You only know how to play around? Unacceptable!"

Hastily, Lin Feiran pledged, "I promise to focus on my studies, sir," to appease him. He cautiously asked once more, "But sir, are there any unfulfilled wishes you have?"

Old Principal's confusion persisted, his stern gaze fixed on Lin Feiran as he continued his admonishment. Standing there, Lin Feiran was struck by the realization that his words were not reaching Old Principal at all.

Currently, it's peak hour, with school letting out and everyone heading home. There was significant traffic congestion right outside the school gates. An impatient driver's relentless honking cuts through the air, the sound echoing against the school walls. Old Principal, in the middle of his admonitions, stopped abruptly as the piercing honk reached him, and his demeanour instantly changed. With a sense of urgency, he spun around and headed straight for the academic building, shouting, "Air raid

warning! Air raid warning! Everyone, run to the bomb shelter quickly!" He dashed off, arms flailing in desperation.

As Old Principal ran towards the academic building, Gu Kaifeng came into view, running effortlessly towards Lin Feiran. Bathed in the glow of the setting sun, his youthful exuberance was undeniable, each step resonating with Lin Feiran, a stark contrast to the grim urgency of Old Principal's world. Oblivious to the desperate cries of "Run to the bomb shelter", their paths crossed, each locked in their own reality.

A few students on their way out of the academic building followed closely behind Gu Kaifeng and also brushed past Old Principal. His warnings went unheard, and no one headed for the bomb shelter. No one even knew where the bomb shelter was at. Only Old Principal, burdened by the resentment of his untimely death and entangled in a haze of confusion and memories, strode determinedly back inside.

He worried about students who might have dismissed his warnings and remained in the building. Though unsure of when it started, it was clear his words no longer carried any weight...

Utterly Unacceptable.

As Lin Feiran watched the retreating figure of Old Principal, a wave of profound sadness washed over him. Tears clouded his vision, blurring the world into a mix of past and present. Despite understanding that those events were from a time long gone, Lin Feiran couldn't hold back the flood of emotions that threatened to overwhelm him.

He realized then that without his Yin-yang Eye ability, Old Principal might have passed his entire high school life unnoticed, a mere shadow among the living. The portrait of the prin-

cipal hung with honour in the school corridor had faded into the backdrop of daily school hustle, barely garnering a second glance.

So, when Gu Kaifeng returned, phone in hand, he found Lin Feiran by the school gate clutching his bag like a picture of heartache. Lin Feiran's tears flowed freely, his eyes reddened and his lashes wet, making him seem like a fragile beauty. Teardrops gathered in the corners of his eyes and fell in a steady rhythm to the ground.

Gu Kaifeng's heart skipped a beat, worry clouding his face as he made a beeline for Lin Feiran before enveloping him in a comforting embrace. "Who's given you trouble?" he asked, his gaze sweeping the area for a potential target.

Around them, only a few unfamiliar faces glanced their way. They quickly looked away when they caught Gu Kaifeng's sharp look.

"It's nothing like that," Lin Feiran rushed to explain, dabbing at his eyes with the sleeve of his uniform. "Just felt a bit down all of a sudden."

"But you were fine when we were walking to the gate a little while ago," Gu Kaifeng wasn't convinced. He let go of Lin Feiran and paced back and forth with the restlessness of a detective on a trail. After scanning the area and finding no one suspicious, he returned to Lin Feiran's side to give him another protective embrace. "Honey, are you worried I might start trouble? I promise, no fists will be thrown at me, okay? Just talk to me about what's bothering you."

Lin Feiran hesitated before awkwardly mumbling, "Just got something in my eye..."

"Bullshit." Gu Kaifeng scoffed, clearly not buying the explanation.

Lin Feiran was speechless.

Embarrassed and caught off guard by his own vulnerability, yet because he was unable to tell Old Principal's story, Lin Feiran scrambled for a plausible excuse. "You took forever with your phone. I was just... getting antsy waiting around."

Gu Kaifeng frowned. "That doesn't sound like you."

Sticking to his story, Lin Feiran avoided Gu Kaifeng's penetrating gaze, staring at the ground instead. "Really, I've just been standing here waiting, and now my feet hurt."

"I thought I had left my phone in the dorm, but it was actually in the classroom. I went to the dorm first, so that's why it took me so long to get back," Gu Kaifeng quickly explained, his voice softening, "Are your tears really because of this?"

He peered at Lin Feiran, now a master at reading his expressions.

Lin Feiran ducked his head, avoiding Gu Kaifeng's gaze. "Yeah... just don't look at me right now. It's kind of embarrassing."

Respecting his wish, Gu Kaifeng didn't press further. While holding Lin Feiran's hand, he quickly stole a kiss on it when no one was watching. "Sorry, I'll remember next time," he whispered.

Lin Feiran, feeling guilty for his overreaction, quickly said, "No, I was just being too sensitive."

Gu Kaifeng's laughter was gentle, "But I find it cute when you're a bit sulky and get mad over nothing."

Lin Feiran, who was more known for his toughness than sen-

sitivity, chose not to respond.

"What a clingy little rice cake, huh? Crying after not being glued to me for just ten minutes." Poor Gu Kaifeng, caught up in his daydreams, was completely smitten with his own fantasies.

Lin Feiran, who was not known for his clinginess but for his toughness, chose not to respond.

"The taxi's here. Let's head out," Gu Kaifeng flashed his phone before gently taking Lin Feiran by the wrist to guide him forward. With a playful nudge, he teased, "Feeling more at ease now that you're sticking to me?"

Lin-little sticky rice cake, burdened by a mix of feelings and misconceptions, replied in resignation, "Yeah, I'm happy now."

Despite the emotional turmoil, Lin Feiran stuck to their plan of hotpot and a movie for the evening to avoid arousing any suspicions.

Their first movie date took place under the dim lights of the cinema where Gu Kaifeng held Lin Feiran's hand with determined affection. Pleased by Lin Feiran's easy acceptance, Gu Kaifeng grew more daring, shifting both popcorn buckets to his side to offer Lin Feiran bites from his hand instead, cherishing the light brush of his fingertips against Lin Feiran's lips. As a result, Gu Kaifeng found it hard to concentrate on the movie, captivated instead by the thrilling sensations each time Lin Feiran's lips met his fingers.

On the taxi ride home, Gu Kaifeng broke the silence, "Did you like the movie?"

Lin Feiran hesitated before replying, "It was alright, I guess.

What about you?"

Gu Kaifeng confessed, "To be honest, I didn't really pay attention. How did they even find that spaceship in the end?"

Lin Feiran thought for a bit. "Which spaceship?"

Gu Kaifeng laughed heartily. "Guess I wasn't the only one distracted!"

*What a waste to miss out on such a great movie!*

"Let's drop it."

Gu Kaifeng nudged him with his shoulder and leaned closer to whisper, cautious of the driver's ears, "Were you thinking of me then?"

"Partly," Lin Feiran admitted.

"And the rest?" Gu Kaifeng probed further.

With Old Principal's image lingering in his thoughts, Lin Feiran diverted, "Just... reviewing 'Ode to the Red Cliffs' in my mind."

Gu Kaifeng's heart warmed at the implications and teased, "So you were thinking of me after all."

Lin Feiran offered no rebuttal. *If that's what makes you happy.*

When they returned to the empty house, Gu Kaifeng steered Lin Feiran towards the shower. Now more familiar with the place, Lin Feiran grabbed a fresh outfit from Gu Kaifeng's wardrobe and headed to the bathroom. Inside, there was a drawer full of personal care items dedicated to him—his favourite brands of toothpaste, shampoo, and body wash. It was a small but significant space reserved just for him.

Upon learning Lin Feiran's parents were out of town for work, Gu Kaifeng's parents welcomed the idea of him spending weekends at their place. His pleasant demeanour, academic ex-

cellence, and charming personality contrasted sharply with Gu Kaifeng's previous rough crowd, bringing his parents a sense of relief. Their hospitality was genuine, as they saw Lin Feiran not just as a friend of their son but also a positive influence.

*When it's time to come out of the closet, things should go rather smoothly!*

After showering and drying his hair, Lin Feiran grabbed Gu Kaifeng's laptop, hopped into bed, and leaned against the headboard before booting it up. "Just checking something real quick," he announced. His slim legs were folded with his knees, his feet peeking out from his pyjama pants on top of the sheets.

Gu Kaifeng couldn't help but pause while choosing his nightwear, his attention unwittingly drawn to Lin Feiran's delicate feet. To him, every aspect of Lin Feiran, down to the smallest detail, held an allure that was hard to ignore. Even Lin Feiran's toes were enchanting. They were cute and round with the nails trimmed short and clean. *Beauty surely is in the eye of the beholder.*

Catching Gu Kaifeng's lingering look, Lin Feiran felt self-conscious and quickly tucked his feet away. "What are you doing?"

"You... Just wait." Gu Kaifeng grinned and gave a playful squeeze to the hidden feet under the quilt. He then gathered his clothes and headed to the shower.

Lin Feiran remembered Old Principal's name was Jiang Duruo—a name he found elegant and memorable when he first saw it under the school corridor's portrait.

Lin Ferian's attempt to communicate with Mr Jiang at the school gate earlier had been frustratingly futile. Mr Jiang didn't

know he had died, his awareness frozen in a bygone era. He was caught in a loop, driven by the routines and responsibilities of his living days, and it made any meaningful interaction impossible.

With Mr Jiang unable to shed light on his situation, Lin Feiran decided to try looking on the internet.

Lin Feiran opened the web browser, and as his cursor hovered over the search bar, a drop-down list of recent searches popped up. "Surprise birthday ideas for boyfriend," "Limited edition basketball shoes," "Top romantic spots" etc.

"Huh?" Lin Feiran blinked in surprise, realizing these were Gu Kaifeng's past searches.

He couldn't help but picture Gu Kaifeng, who was always effortlessly cool and charming, sitting in front of this computer with brows furrowed in concentration. The thought of Gu Kaifeng, the quintessential smooth talker and heartthrob straight out of a romance novel, earnestly searching for ways to make him happy, enveloped Lin Feiran in a warmth that was beyond words. Gu Kaifeng's tender dedication stirred Lin Feiran's heart, melting it into a pool of gratitude and love.

*Even the school hunk had to put in effort to learn how to flirt after all!*

While Gu Kaifeng was showering, Lin Feiran settled down and typed in Old Principal's name, Jiang Duruo, into the search engine. His search led him to various links, including the school's official site. From there, he found a section dedicated to the school's history and downloaded a document for a closer look.

The document revealed the school's founder to be none other

than Mr Jiang himself, and the school was approaching its 95th anniversary in just over half a month. In a time marked by foreign invasion, Mr Jiang had courageously kept the school doors open, collaborating with local villagers to ensure that every student had a safe place. When threatened with danger, the students would scatter, finding refuge in the villagers' homes, one or two students per household. Once the immediate peril had subsided, the students would reconvene for their classes.

Tragedy struck when Mr Jiang perished in a raid while valiantly saving a female student from the invaders at the height of the war. Though all the students evaded capture, the ruthless invaders responded with arson, setting much of the school ablaze. The campus we know today rose from those very ashes.

This chapter of the school's history closed with these wartime details, leading into stories of alumni who survived that turbulent era. Many of them went on to become trailblazers in society. Notably, the girl Mr Jiang sacrificed his life to protect later emerged as a renowned scientist. She made her achievements a tribute to Mr Jiang's legacy. If any of these former students are still alive today, they would be well into their eighties.

Lin Feiran heard footsteps approaching from the corridor, a sign of Gu Kaifeng's return from the shower. He quickly erased his recent search history and deleted the downloaded school history document to prevent any questions.

*What could Mr Jiang's unresolved attachment be?* Lin Feiran was deep in contemplation with his chin propped up by his hand, and his gaze fixed on the blank screen of the laptop.

Mr Jiang had died in a noble effort to protect his students, and the subsequent destruction of the school likely left him

unaware of their eventual fates. Lin Feiran wondered, could informing Mr Jiang that the students he had strived to save not only survived but went on to thrive help in easing his lingering resentment?

However, there was still an obstacle he had to overcome first. Mr Jiang was in a state of confusion, making communication impossible.

Lost in these thoughts, Lin Feiran let out a sigh.

"Why are you sighing?" Peering over, Gu Kaifeng found Lin Feiran staring blankly at the laptop screen. In a dramatic gesture, he clutched at his chest. "Phew, what a relief! I was worried you had stumbled on my 'study materials'."

With a twinkle in his eye, Lin Feiran asked, "What study materials?"

"Right here," Gu Kaifeng said with a hint of mischief. He placed his hand over Lin Feiran's, guiding him to open a folder labelled "study materials" on the laptop's E drive. Inside, there was a collection of ".avi" files with academic-sounding titles—"English Lectures", "Physics Master Classes", etc.

Lin Feiran was baffled.

"Porn. Fancy a study session?" Gu Kaifeng whispered, his breath tickling Lin Feiran's ear.

"Nope." Lin Feiran's mouth twitched as he rolled his eyes. He flung the laptop onto the bed and scooted ten centimetres away from Gu Kaifeng. His voice acidic, "Are those actors good-looking? What goes through your head watching them?"

Gu Kaifeng had been looking forward to watching something like this with Lin Feiran, hoping it might lead to some pleasurable moments. However, he hadn't counted on Lin Feiran's jeal-

ousy. A sweet headache washed over Gu Kaifeng as he scooted ten centimetres closer, shamelessly snuggling up and insisting, "Honestly, they're not even that good-looking. My thoughts? Crystal clear. I've got full control over my inner demons and chanting mantras over here."

Lin Feiran almost laughed, but he had to keep his boyfriend's principles in check. With a stern expression, he asked, "If they're not good-looking, why do you have so many clips?"

*Who could tolerate their boyfriend wanking over other men? No way!*

Gu Kaifeng coughed lightly. "Well, I used to find them attractive..."

Hearing this, Lin Feiran scooted another ten centimetres away, expression flat. "Enjoy them in your own time then."

Gu Kaifeng was quick to close the gap. "Actually, since getting to know you, they've lost their appeal."

Lin Feiran shot back, "Sure, hypocrite."

*This time, his "quick-temper" label is really stuck for good!*

"Believe me," Gu Kaifeng pleaded, selecting the folder and pressing "delete" to emphasize his point. Once the folder vanished, he turned to Lin Feiran and gently held his hand. "See? All gone. None of that stuff compares to the beauty of just one of your fingers."

Lin Feiran peeked at the desktop's recycle bin and saw it was empty, and his mood instantly lifted.

With a smirk, Gu Kaifeng brought Lin Feiran's finger up to his lips and gave the tip a quick lick. When he didn't get a negative reaction, he took the digit into his mouth and began treating it as though it were a certain other appendage.

The sudden wet warmth around his finger stopped all thought processes in Lin Feiran's head, and before he could react to the foreign sensation, Gu Kaifeng began sucking it, his well-defined lips forming a tight seal as it slid back and forth. And how could he ignore the warmth and slickness of that tongue rubbing against his finger? It was all so suggestive that Lin Feiran flushed bright red.

"Stop that..." Lin Feiran wriggled his finger free but also ended up pulling Gu Kaifeng closer. Gu Kaifeng showered his blushing little sticky rice cake with kisses and caressed him all over.

"Babe, wanna try the real deal?" He squeezed Lin Feiran's finger, which was still moist with saliva, and gave the mattress a firm pat, sending the two of them bobbing slightly. He leaned into Lin Feiran's ear and breathed, "Let's not waste such a nice bed."

Lin Feiran turned away in a panic, wishing he could stuff his head into one of the pillows, but he didn't feel opposed to the suggestion.

"I'unno..." he mumbled, "I dunno how to... with my mouth."

He really didn't. Gu Kaifeng at least had some exposure to porn, whereas he had close to no experience at all.

"It's okay, I do." Gu Kaifeng began breathing harder. His eyes glimmered with hunger. "I'll show you."

No, a pillow wouldn't do. Lin Feiran was so nervous he could just about crawl under the bed.

Amid the erotic escalation, Xiaxia came trotting merrily into the room, jingling the whole way because of the new collar Lin Feiran had bought him. The pup immediately tried to jump on

the bed.

"Out, Xiaxia, out!" Gu Kaifeng commanded.

*What a rude way to speak to your brother*, thought Lin Feiran.

Standing on his hind legs, Xiaxia whined and begged the half-naked Lin Feiran, but his hooman brother grabbed him by the scruff and hurried out to the living room, where he quickly dumped two bags of wet food into the pup's food bowl.

"Good boy, now eat your food," said Gu Kaifeng while patting Xiaxia's head extra roughly.

Meanwhile, it finally occurred to Lin Feiran that he had to deal with his spectators. He pushed himself up to his knees and bowed towards the air before him. Palms together, he prayed, "Dear ancestors, could you give us some privacy for a little bit? I promise I'll treat you all to a big meal. Please."

He didn't need to activate his Yin-yang Eye to see the disappointment and fury on the faces in the room.

Luckily, ghosts didn't need to be revived. Otherwise, there wouldn't be enough SuXiao JiuXin Wan to distribute!

After paying respects to Gu Kaifeng's dead ancestors, he heard hurried footsteps coming down the corridor and immediately lay back down. The next moment, he thought perhaps lying there would come off too slutty, too eager to perform fellatio for Gu Kaifeng, so he sat up again and fished out a random book from his schoolbag. He opened it up and pretended to read from it to give off an aloof image. Once Gu Kaifeng returned, he put even more effort into being serious, his face buried in the book like a devoted student.

"Who are you fooling?" Amused, Gu Kaifeng whisked the book away and climbed on top of Lin Feiran, who laid down

without objection. When he felt the erection against his own, he ground his hips into it even harder. "Someone's happy to see me."

He pulled off Lin Feiran's bottoms and unbuttoned his shirt before planting kisses on Lin Feiran's nose, lips, chin... The lower he went, the harder Lin Feiran breathed. A trail of pink hickeys bloomed from his collarbones to his belly button.

Still too shy, Lin Feiran squeezed his legs together and even tugged on his shirt in an effort to cover up his prim and proper white boxer briefs. Chuckling, Gu Kaifeng spread apart the long, slender limbs and took a deep breath against the thin fabric. Lin Feiran's scalp tingled at the coolness on his sensitive organ, internally panicking.

On the other hand, Gu Kaifeng was lost in the dirty deed. "Mmm, you smell so good, babe."

Lin Feiran was so overwhelmed that he didn't understand Gu Kaifeng's utterance as a tease and took it seriously. "Th-that's 'cause I just took a sh-shower."

Gu Kaifeng gave a quiet chuckle before tracing the shape of the erect member wrapped in white with his tongue. The boxer briefs became moist and clung to Lin Feiran's skin, the cold sensation further arousing him. Admittedly, this provided Lin Feiran little satisfaction, but the provocative undertones of Gu Kaifeng's actions sent a heat wave up to his head, making his face and neck crimson.

The next moment, Lin Feiran jolted, his hips twisting in a magical way that sent Gu Kaifeng over the edge. Hooking onto the elastic waistband of the damp underpants, Gu Kaifeng yanked them down and left them dangling on a delicate ankle.

Lin Feiran had a fair, adorable complexion, and his cock was the same. Its length and girth were average, the shape curved ever so slightly. It had a glistening drop on its crown, revealing how excited it was.

"Did you like that?" Gu Kaifeng flicked the shaft teasingly and just as Lin Feiran began to protest, he took it into his mouth.

It felt just like what the sensation earlier promised it would feel like. Tight, gentle, wet, and warm... only this time, it wasn't his finger being serviced. Humming out of pleasure, Lin Feiran felt the danger and wanted to stop before the addictive sensation ate him up. It was spreading throughout his body like a flame from the inside out—something he'd never experienced while taking care of his own needs.

He couldn't grasp how such a pleasurable feeling could exist. Bewildered, he glanced down at Gu Kaifeng and saw his handsome face buried between his legs and those kissable lips wrapped around his length, leaving it glistening wet. Noticing the gaze, Gu Kaifeng looked up, and the two were locked in a stare until Lin Feiran averted his eyes like a bunny scurrying away from a wolf and covered his face with a hand.

"Don't look at me," he asked, no, begged.

Lured by pleasure, the beautiful, naive boy let himself indulge in ecstasy, his big, doe eyes wide and wanton and his pretty face pink with arousal. He was reminded by shame and guilt to escape, but he couldn't bring himself to stop, so all he could do was hide his face to self-soothe.

Seeing this tantalizing view, Gu Kaifeng felt another wave of arousal wash over him and quickened his actions.

Very soon, the inexperienced Lin Feiran reached his climax. Within the span of minutes, he learnt the addictive sensation of orgasm and wanted nothing more than to go for round two despite having always considered himself disinterested in sex. Of course, he was too shy to bring it up. Instead, he pulled out two tissues from the box on the bedside table for Gu Kaifeng.

"S-Sorry, I forgot to warn you. Here, spit it out."

But he was too late. Gu Kaifeng made a noisy gulp and swallowed his load.

"Oh..." Lin Feiran grabbed the nearest pillow and pressed his face into it. How could he look Gu Kaifeng in the eye now?

*He really swallowed it!*

"I worked so hard for the cake filling. There's no way I'd spit it out." Gu Kaifeng smacked his lips together as if he were a food critic. "Excellent flavour profile. There's a slight sweetness."

"Seriously..." Lin Feiran couldn't even form a complete sentence, but Gu Kaifeng didn't know when to stop.

"It is a bit thick in consistency though. How long have you not jacked off?"

Overcame with embarrassment, Lin Feiran began considering how to leave in his pyjamas and hail a taxi to go back to the dorm.

"Alright, I'm just teasing." Gu Kaifeng pulled the pillow off of Lin Feiran's face and led one of his hands to his erection. "Help me out, please?"

Lin Feiran bit down on his own trembling lips. His avoidant eyes revealed his insecurities, but he didn't refuse. He got down on his knees and leaned into Gu Kaifeng's crotch with a brave, sacrificial expression.

Gu Kaifeng raised an eyebrow at Lin Feiran, who was crouching on the bed like a kitten. "What are you doing?"

Lin Feiran raised a hand in front of his own face. "Um, do what you did for me?"

Then he started to pull at Gu Kaifeng's clothes.

He was shy, but he wanted Gu Kaifeng to experience the ecstasy he had experienced, so he made up his mind to give it a shot.

"It's okay." Gu Kaifeng turned down the offer with extreme difficulty. He'd be lying if he said he didn't want to get blown, but he didn't have the heart to have his beautiful, graceful little prince do it.

"How come?" Lin Feiran was upset.

"It'll trigger your gag reflex. We'll try next time, okay?" After indirectly bragging about his size, Gu Kaifeng showed Lin Feiran where to put his hand. "You can use your hand today. Do it like you would do it to yourself."

That was a hard ask for an inexperienced guy like Lin Feiran. He gave the hard flesh a rub over the pyjamas before feeling brave enough to reach underneath the fabric. He didn't have the courage to look at it just yet. He took hold of it and...

Gu Kaifeng was bigger than him!

Jealousy reared its head when the hard rod in his hand twitched and became even bigger as more blood rushed south. The heat seemed to ignite in his palm and scorch a path to his brain where it burned his consciousness away.

They were sitting face to face, nose to nose. With his member being serviced, Gu Kaifeng was free to touch the boy in his embrace as much as he wanted. From head to toe, he didn't miss a

single spot. He found himself kneading the two plump cheeks on Lin Feiran's behind until they were red hot, ready for the oven. Meanwhile, Lin Feiran stayed quietly in his embrace like a ball of sticky rice dough, letting him do as he pleased without any objection.

"Kiss me," came Gu Kaifeng's husky, provocative voice. His lips brushed Lin Feiran's as he talked.

Although he was flushed pink, Lin Feiran pressed his lips against his and even stuck out his tongue for a shy yet playful lick.

Gu Kaifeng took the opportunity to push his limits. "Who am I to you, babe?"

"You're my man," Lin Feiran whispered.

Gu Kaifeng asked again out of fun, "What was that? Didn't hear you."

"I said, you're my man."

"Keep saying it, babe."

Gu Kaifeng was on cloud nine getting a handjob from his boyfriend for the first time. At the urging of Lin Feiran's honeyed voice, he didn't last as long as he usually would. Before he knew it, he had come all over Lin Feiran's face.

Both having reached their release, they found their heads cleared of lust.

"I need to wash my face." Putting on his pants, Lin Feiran wiped away the spend from his cheek before sliding off the bed.

Gu Kaifeng followed behind. They passed by the living room where Xiaxia was sprawled on the sofa, belly exposed and utterly content, but he barely acknowledged them with a lazy hum, not even glancing at his favourite brother-in-law.

After freshening up in the bathroom, they returned to the bedroom now that Lin Feiran's earlier sex maniac moment had settled. Then, the thought of Gu Kaifeng's ancestors crept in, sparking a flicker of nervousness in him. To demonstrate he had not led their beloved ninth-generation sole heir astray, Lin Feiran grabbed his bag and announced, "Let's hit the study room to start our homework."

Gu Kaifeng, offering Lin Feiran a look filled with mixed emotions, said, "Actually, I picked up a new gaming console last week. Thought we could give it a try tonight."

"Homework first, then play." Lin Feiran said, seriousness written all over his face. *Still thinking about games? Your ancestors will be turning in their graves! Let's see some dedication, please!*

Gu Kaifeng couldn't help but chuckle at Lin Feiran's serious tone and decided to surrender. "Okay, okay, let's do homework. Whatever you say goes!"

Lin Feiran did more research with Gu Kaifeng's laptop on Sunday.

After Gu Kaifeng had drifted off last night, Lin Feiran laid awake, his mind spinning with ways to aid Mr Jiang. The challenge remained: direct communication with him seemed out of reach. Yet, an idea sparked—What if certain individuals could reach him? How about the students that Mr Jiang had saved years ago?

The students he had once shielded, seeing them safe after all these years, might just soothe Mr Jiang's restless spirit. If his worries were alleviated, perhaps it could stir his awareness.

These students, teenagers during the war, would now be elders. It was a long shot, and he wondered if Mr Jiang would recognize their aged appearances, but Lin Feiran was out of alternatives...

With these thoughts in mind, Lin Feiran searched the internet for every single student recorded in the document from that era. He felt hopeful when he found that some, including the girl Mr Jiang had saved with his life, were still alive. However, these individuals, shaped by the crucible of war, had risen to remarkable heights: esteemed retired officials, renowned scientists, and respected scholars. Lacking any means of contact and being just a high school student himself, Lin Feiran knew it wasn't as simple as calling them up and expecting them to appear at the school.

He recorded the names and details of these alumni on his phone, then closed the laptop and stretched on Gu Kaifeng's bed. The sheets were fragrant with the distinctive scent of Gu Kaifeng's body wash, an understated yet invigorating herbal aroma. That scent, so intimately tied to Gu Kaifeng, brought back vivid memories of their intimate moments last night, sending a surge of warmth, a tinge of bashfulness, and a flutter of excitement through Lin Feiran. Lost in these swirling emotions, he hugged the pillow tight, rolling around in a fit of giddy laughter.

Each flashback to the night before sent waves of excitement through him, making him giddy with joy.

Just as he was caught in this whirlwind of happiness, Gu Kaifeng walked in, holding a tub of ice cream...

After a few gleeful kicks of his legs, Lin Feiran regained his composure and sat up. He met Gu Kaifeng's amused look.

Gu Kaifeng stood there, clearly enjoying the scene. His lips twitched, barely holding back a chuckle. Feigning ignorance, he asked, "What's got you so bouncy?"

Lin Feiran blushed, words eluding him.

"Try some of this," Gu Kaifeng said, peeling off the lid of the ice cream tub and scooping up a generous spoonful of Hawaiian fruit flavoured ice cream for Lin Feiran. "Cool off a bit."

Lin Feiran accepted the spoonful with a shy nod.

The ice cream Lin Feiran had offered to the little ghost girl the previous week was this very Hawaiian fruit flavour—her favourite. Overzealously ensuring she had plenty, Lin Feiran had purchased five whole boxes. After all, ghosts don't fret over stomach aches or tooth decay. Observant as ever, Gu Kaifeng mistook Lin Feiran's actions as a personal preference for this flavour. When Lin Ferian had rummaged through the fridge for a midnight snack the night before, he found an almost comedic stash of Hawaiian-flavoured ice cream waiting for him, warming his heart.

After a few more spoonfuls, Gu Kaifeng looked at him expectantly, "You like this taste, right?"

"Yeah!" Lin Feiran responded enthusiastically.

Well, his appreciation might have just begun today.

Gu Kaifeng also opened his own tub of ice cream and joined Lin Feiran on the edge of the bed. As they settled in, the room embraced them. The two striking young men sat together, bathed in the warm glow of the afternoon sun, with a Yorkie contentedly resting its head on one of their slippers. It was as if time itself had thickened into a warm, honeyed flow, enveloping the room in tranquillity.

Breaking the silence, Gu Kaifeng asked between bites of ice cream. "Ever tried golf?"

Lin Feiran shook his head. "Nope, never have."

"I could teach you. I'm pretty good at it," Gu Kaifeng offered with a hint of pride in his voice. "My dad has a friend with a golf course. He's free next weekend. We could go and try it out."

Lin Feiran's eyes lit up as he nodded in agreement, not jealous of Gu Kaifeng's myriad of talents but rather filled with gentle pride.

*He's truly boyfriend material! Aside from singing and playing instruments, there seems to be nothing he can't do!*

The mention of Gu Kaifeng's father reminded Lin Feiran of the family's generosity towards the school. Curiosity piqued, he began, "Is your dad..."

"Our dad." Gu Kaifeng corrected gently.

Lin Feiran hesitated, a touch too shy to use such a familiar term. He tried again, "Is uncle... close with the principal?"

"They've had dinner together a few times, so I'd say yes. Why do you ask?" Gu Kaifeng fixed his gaze on Lin Feiran as if trying to read his thoughts. "Is there something you need from the principal?"

Feeling slightly awkward, Lin Feiran fiddled with his nose before admitting, "Sort of."

"I'm all ears. I'll talk to my dad," Gu Kaifeng offered, wrapping an arm around him reassuringly. "As long as it doesn't openly go against school rules, it should be fine."

Hesitantly, Lin Feiran pulled up a memo on his phone, showing Gu Kaifeng a list of names. "The school's 95th-anniversary celebration is on December 12th, right? These people are all

distinguished alumni..." He trailed off, nervous about how his request would be received, before adding softly, "Could we maybe ask the principal to invite them? They're esteemed leaders, scholars, and scientists. It could be really inspirational for everyone."

Gu Kaifeng looked genuinely confused, then humorously checked his ear, as if to check he had heard correctly. "You want to invite these alumni to the anniversary? Did I get that right?"

Lin Feiran nodded meekly.

"Are these people someone you look up to?" Gu Kaifeng's eyebrows furrowed slightly.

"No, it's not that... I just thought it would be a good gesture," Lin Feiran mumbled, feeling slightly embarrassed by his own suggestion.

Gu Kaifeng sighed heavily, his concern evident. "Ranran..."

Sensing his tone, Lin Feiran hastily interjected. "Forget I even mentioned it. It was just a thought."

Gu Kaifeng shook his head, half in awe, half in jest. "Why do I feel like I'm punching above my weight here? You're on a whole other level. Just when things get romantic last night, you're all about getting back to studying. And now, when you finally ask for something, it's this noble yet utterly unexpected request."

*My Little Sticky is really something—even flirting is done with political correctness!*

Lin Feiran was momentarily speechless.

Gu Kaifeng playfully hinted at their future. "When we're in college, will you have me memorize the party constitution? One sex with me for every memorization, no sex if I forget?"

Lin Feiran blushed deeply and gave Gu Kaifeng a light jab in the ribs in exasperation. "Quit joking around!"

"Just kidding," Gu Kaifeng chuckled before stealing a kiss from the corner of Lin Feiran's lips, still sweet from the ice cream. Confidently patting his chest, he added, "Relax, I've got this covered. Let me talk to my dad tonight. For our school's 95th anniversary, we've gotta have alumni speakers, right? And these folks you've picked out—what an educational gold mine!"

Lin Feiran breathed a sigh of relief, pleasantly surprised at how effortlessly it was resolved. "Thanks," he said reflexively.

"Thanking me, huh?" Gu Kaifeng teased. "Guess I should figure out how to get a proper 'thank you' from you. What should I do?"

In the warm glow of the afternoon sun, Lin Feiran gave Gu Kaifeng a bemused look. "As if you ever hold back on what you want to do ..."

*After all, isn't that the whole point of having a boyfriend? Do whatever you want!*

As Lin Feiran observed Gu Kaifeng's playful shift into something greedier, his voice trailed off until his last word was completely silent.

"Okay then, babe, since you've given me the green light. I'll do exactly as I please." Gu Kaifeng dramatically warmed up his hands and wore an iconic lecherous, devilish grin. He then pounced on Lin Feiran like a starving tiger and pushed him onto the bed.

Lin Feiran's eyes were shyly lowered, offering no protest. He was just simply lying under Gu Kaifeng.

However, Gu Kaifeng's advances stopped for just a tender

kiss on the cheek before he drew back.

Touching his cheek, Lin Feiran looked up in disbelief. "That's all?"

Teetering on the edge of temptation, Gu Kaifeng gritted his teeth. "Fuck, since when did you start playing easy to get?"

Lin Feiran's eyes sparkled with feigned innocence. "Have I?"

"You did it again!" Gu Kaifeng accused.

And so, Lin Ferian received one set of "affectionate kisses, gentle bites, and soft caresses" as Gu Kaifeng pleased.

# Chapter 15

Their days unfolded in peaceful bliss. Thanks to Gu Kaifeng's reliable connections, Lin Feiran learned that the school had indeed decided to invite the esteemed alumni for the 95th-anniversary celebration. While their attendance was still up in the air, it sparked a glimmer of hope.

In the days leading up to the celebration, Lin Feiran attempted to catch Mr Jiang at the gate after their last afternoon class a few times. Unsurprisingly, he ended up witnessing Mr Jiang's re-enactments of his sacrifice over and over. True to his theory, Mr Jiang would "die" at the same time each day. Despite numerous attempts to engage with Mr Jiang, every conversation invariably ended with a stern lecture from him. Lin Feiran had no choice but to pin his hopes on the upcoming celebration.

Soon, 12 December arrived. The celebration was set for the morning, and the day's classes got pushed to the afternoon and evening. At eight o'clock, faculties and students gathered in the auditorium, the same venue used for the arts festival. The stage was modestly set, featuring a long table adorned with a series

of nameplates. Alongside the school leaders were five names unfamiliar to most—the distinguished alumni Lin Feiran had identified.

Miraculously, all five had made it.

Lin Feiran's classmates organized themselves into two orderly lines by height, boys on one side and girls on the other, before making their way to their assigned seats in the auditorium. Lin Feiran stood eighth in line among the boys, while Gu Kaifeng took the lead with six students between them.

No sooner after they had sat down that Gu Kaifeng made his way to Lin Feiran's side. "Dude, let's swap," he whispered to Zhang Xu, who was next to Lin Feiran.

After successfully taking Zhang Xu's place under the guise of dimmed lights, Gu Kaifeng soon gave Lin Feiran's waist a playful squeeze.

Wang Zhuo couldn't resist a teasing whistle at this. "Whoa, opting for couple's seats even at the school anniversary? That's some real love right there!"

He Hao, sharing the so-called "couple seat" with Wang Zhuo, shot a glance at him, "Ms Zheng's watching you."

Wang Zhuo straightened up immediately, his earlier playfulness evaporating in an instant.

Meanwhile, Lin Feiran subtly shifted away from Gu Kaifeng to activate his Yin-yang Eye. "Quit it, Ms Zheng might see us."

Gu Kaifeng sighed in resignation, "Alright."

Noticing the disappointment in his "wolf-dog" boyfriend, Lin Feiran leaned in and whispered, "We'll have time back at the dorm."

Hearing this, Gu Kaifeng's expression immediately bright-

ened up!

Moments after Lin Feiran's Yin-yang Eye activated, he began his cautious observation of the audience—a mix of the living and ghosts.

The "top-student" ghost, always with his unnervingly long tongue, was perched on Zhang Xu's shoulders as usual, his tongue unusually animated—a sign of his unusually excited mood.

The little ghost girl, now barely visible, sat serenely on Ms Zheng's lap, absorbed in playing with her doll. Lin Feiran only spotted her because he knew where to look. Otherwise, her presence had become so faint that she was nearly imperceptible.

Then, there was Drama Queen, who scared Lin Feiran from the backstage mirror at the arts festival. She was now amusingly mimicking the current principal's serious demeanour from the stage.

Before long, the figure Lin Feiran knew only too well arrived: the half-headed Mr Jiang. He slipped through the door and meandered the aisle, casting disapproving glances at students who dared to daydream rather than focus on their studies during the day.

*Even the teachers had forsaken their lessons.*

*Preposterous!*

As the ceremony kicked off, the five esteemed alumni were escorted by students to the stage. They exchanged handshakes with the school leaders before taking their places.

Their arrival sparked polite applause from the audience, though the energy was more obligatory than enthusiastic. The student body, Gu Kaifeng included, found the event boring, as

evident by his courteous claps of only three counts.

The alumni consisted of three elderly gentlemen and two ladies. Lin Feiran peered intently at them, trying to spot the female student Mr Jiang had once saved. The years had reshaped their faces so drastically that the photos Lin Feiran had seen online offered little help in distinguishing her from the others.

However, Mr Jiang recognized them immediately.

Given Mr Jiang's confused state, always befuddled that he couldn't make heads or tails of what people said, he even mixed up car horns with wartime sirens. For him to recognize these five, now greatly aged, seemed impossible. However, as they took the stage, Mr Jiang's restless pacing halted.

It defied explanation.

Seated near the aisle, Lin Feiran was close enough to catch Mr Jiang whispering their names in a crackly, trembling voice. "Li Jingshu... Zhang Shunying... Wang Youqing..." Each name was pronounced with such clarity just diagonally behind Lin Feiran's right side. "Liu Guangzhi... Xu Chengyong..."

These were the exact names Lin Feiran had recorded on his phone.

After naming them, Mr Jiang hurried so quickly towards the stage that he might as well stumbled his way there.

The current principal was midway through his speech, but Lin Feiran paid little mind. His attention was solely on Mr Jiang.

Mr Jiang leaned forward with great effort to make his gaze meet each of the five alumni. Whenever he got a clear look at a familiar face, he'd straightened up and deeply sighed.

After the current principal's speech, the alumni representa-

tive, Ms Li Jingshu, was about to give hers. She briefly glanced at her notes before setting them aside along with her reading glasses. With a vibrancy unexpected of her years, she greeted, "Hello, teachers and students. I was once a student here seventy years ago. Much like many of you here today, I was sixteen at the time..."

Mr Jiang couldn't stop nodding, clearly overcome with emotion. He reached out to gently pat Ms Li Jingshu's grey hair as she spoke, a gesture of comfort one might offer a child.

The scene was strikingly odd—Mr Jiang, who looked to be in his sixties, appeared younger than the now-elderly Ms Li Jingshu. As funny as that may have seemed, Lin Feiran was deeply moved instead. His heart was intensely touched as the story unfolded on stage.

"Today, I return to share a piece of history about the soul of our school, its founder, Mr Jiang Duruo," Ms Li Jingshu shared with a warmth that filled the auditorium. "While our country faced invasion, Mr Jiang stood firm against the invaders to keep our doors open..."

Mr Jiang nodded in agreement with Ms Li Jingshu's words. Then, with an air of uncertainty, he turned back to the assembled teachers and students as if unsure how to present himself to them. The stage lights illuminated the tears on his face.

Ms Li Jingshu then started to reminisce about their days at the school under those difficult circumstances. To give an example, she recounted how Mr Jiang, having received a gift of eggs from the villagers, carefully divided a single egg into quarters to ensure each student got a portion.

"In my entire life, I've never tasted an egg as good as the one

I had that day!" She declared, her laughter rich and full. Her fellow alumni echoed her sentiment, their collective laughter resonating through the auditorium. Even the usually reserved Mr Jiang couldn't help but join in, his chuckle breaking through his stoic demeanour.

However, the younger generation of students found themselves drifting off, unable to grasp the depth of the humour from their elders' hardships.

To them, it was just another tale from a bygone era, a familiar occurrence that warranted nothing more than a casual listen. The auditorium fell silent.

Seated not far from the stage, Lin Feiran, after a brief hesitation, burst into sincere and supportive laughter.

Watching Lin Feiran's contagious laughter, Gu Kaifeng quickly followed. He wouldn't let his boyfriend, with a smile as sweet as a flower, laugh alone in awkward solitude. His own laughter filled the hall, mirroring Lin Feiran's but with an extra flourish for emphasis.

Wang Zhuo, caught by surprise at their easy mirth, joined the laughter as well. "They really find joy in the simplest things."

Their laughter thawed the chill in the room, and more students near the stage found themselves smiling and laughing along, lightening the once-solemn atmosphere.

Ms Li Jingshu continued her story back to the school's past under foreign invasion. When she mentioned her near capture and Mr Jiang's ultimate sacrifice to save her, her voice quivered with emotion.

Mr Jiang stood there as if frozen in time, his attention fixated on Ms Li Jingshu with reverence and disbelief. "Jiang Duruo...

dead?" he whispered to himself.

For a moment, he stared at his hand before slowly reaching towards the tabletop, only to realize it passed through the surface like mist. The shock of this discovery sent a visible shudder through his spectral form. "My head..." he murmured, "Where's the rest of it?" His hand groped the air where the other half of his head should have been, confusion and dread clouding his eyes as the reality of his ethereal existence dawned on him.

Rooted in place, he alternated between observing his ethereal form and the tangible world around him.

"We have not let Mr Jiang down," Ms Li Jingshu continued, praising the class's achievements and how they honoured Mr Jiang's legacy, including her tenure at the National Research Institute.

As she spoke, Mr Jiang found solace, gradually regaining his composure after confronting the reality of his demise. With each student success story she mentioned, he echoed enthusiastically, "Well done!"

"Our school has fostered exceptional talents over the years, and I have high confidence it will continue to nurture individuals who will make significant contributions to our nation and society," she said. Then, with a grace that belied her age, she rose to her feet. "Though Mr Jiang may not see us, I wish to honour him today."

With effort, she bowed to the empty air before her. The other four alumni joined her, standing with some support, and together they bowed deeply into the voids before them, imagining that their beloved Mr Jiang was right there.

And indeed, Mr Jiang *was* right there.

Mr Jiang, with his back to the crowd, gestured for his former students to stand, repeating softly, "That's enough, that's enough," as his voice cracked with each reassurance. Hidden from the audience's view, he allowed a deep, heartfelt sob to escape.

Lin Feiran was taken aback by the profound grief of such a stoic scholar.

In the silence that followed Mr Jiang's sobs, the space where the other half of his head had been missing began to sparkle with tiny points of light, like fireflies floating around him. These lights swirled and gently caressed the wound he had endured for seventy years. Growing brighter, they enveloped the wound until a burst of light happened, and they vanished...

There stood Mr Jiang, head restored and mind cleared. He embodied the grace and serenity he was meant to have, no longer bearing any trace of fear. He turned back to the crowd as tears of relief flowed freely down his cheeks.

After seventy years, Mr Jiang finally came to terms with his demise. The sight of his students, now aged and resilient, washed away the remnants of his bitterness. With renewed vigour, he strode across the stage, his eyes alight with wonder as they darted between the faces below and the dignified elders beside him.

"They've all grown so much..." His face was alight with pride, as if seeing five saplings he had planted long ago now standing tall as mighty trees.

"There are no more wars now, right?" he mused aloud, laughter and tears colouring in his voice.

At this moment, Lin Feiran, ever the sensitive one, felt a surge

of emotion. Determined not to cry in such a public setting, he bit his lip hard, struggling to hold back the tears welling in his eyes.

Gu Kaifeng gently touched Lin Feiran's cheek. "Ranran, are you tearing up again?"

Hearing Gu Kaifeng's voice, Lin Feiran lost his composure, and the tears he'd been holding back silently fell onto his school uniform.

"Touched by the story?" Gu Kaifeng quickly pulled out a tissue from his pocket to give to Lin Feiran. Lin Feiran dabbed at his eyes and blew his nose in agreement.

Mr Jiang had disappeared from Lin Feiran's sight with the yang energy from Gu Kaifeng. The emotional weight lifted along with his disappearance, and the transition to the student representative's speech, filled with familiar platitudes, helped Lin Feiran regain his composure.

"I'm alright now," Lin Feiran assured in a whisper, his voice congested from crying.

When Lin Feiran cried, his eyes sparkled even brighter, and his damp eyelashes cast delicate shadows on his cheeks, adding to his allure. Despite having cried, Lin Feiran somehow managed to look even more striking, eliciting a mix of tenderness and the playful urge to tease from those around him.

*Will he cry during sex?* Gu Kaifeng watched him, a whirlwind of thoughts in his mind. The sight sparked countless ideas on how to make him cry during sex just to see that look again!

"Why are you staring at me like that?" Lin Feiran shifted uncomfortably under Gu Kaifeng's unabashed gaze.

Gu Kaifeng, mindful of their public setting, resisted the urge

to say something inappropriate. Instead, he held onto the tissue Lin Feiran had used and softly teased, "Look at you, my little crybaby."

"I'm not!" Lin Feiran protested, feeling unjustly labelled. He believed that anyone who had witnessed Mr Jiang's tale might have cried even more. In his eyes, shedding just a couple of tears was proof of his resilience.

Unable to voice these thoughts, he simply nudged Gu Kaifeng's shin with his foot as a mild rebuke. Gu Kaifeng responded with a smile. He caught Lin Feiran's foot with his own, sparking a silent skirmish of sneakers beneath the table.

After a moment of playful combat, Lin Feiran called for a truce. "Stop, that's enough."

As Gu Kaifeng withdrew, Lin Feiran bent over to check on his sneakers, meticulously looking for any dust on the precious gift. To him, these sneakers were like a treasure that must be handled with the utmost care.

He wore them carefully, constantly worried about scuffs, and made sure his feet were perfectly clean every morning before putting them on. To him, these sneakers were as precious as his eyeballs.

Gu Kaifeng observed Lin Feiran's gentle handling of the shoes. "You know, if they ever wear out, I'll just find you another pair. There's always a way," he said fondly.

"That's no reason to let these get damaged!" Lin Feiran countered, eyes wide with conviction.

"All right, all right, they'll last forever like that," Gu Kaifeng reassured him, smiling at Lin Feiran's earnestness.

Lost in thought, Lin Feiran mused, "This is the first gift you

have ever given me. I want to keep them perfect. One day, when we're old, we can look at them and reminiscence..."

These words sent a flutter through Gu Kaifeng's heart. He leaned in, his breath warm against Lin Feiran's ear as he murmured, "Say that again."

Lin Feiran, catching the intimate undercurrent in Gu Kaifeng's voice, realized his statement might have sounded more like a declaration of love. Feeling suddenly bashful, he changed the subject. "Ms Zheng seems to have been watching us for some time now, let's keep it down."

Gu Kaifeng wasn't certain if Ms Zheng was indeed scrutinizing them, but he acknowledged they had been engaged in hushed conversation for perhaps too long. Clearing his throat, he straightened up, internalizing Lin Feiran's words with the same dedication he typically reserved for memorizing academic material.

*Ranran said he'd remember these sneakers even when we're old and grey...* That thought hit Gu Kaifeng right in the feels. It totally made blowing his entire month's allowance on them worth it!

Three days after the school celebration during lunch break, Lin Feiran was leaning against the railing on the rooftop of the academic building and scrolling on his phone. He proudly recounted to the air beside him, "...Our nation successfully launched its first manned spaceship this year... We hosted the international Olympic Games in 2008... And our first domestically built aircraft carrier was commissioned just this April..."

Next to him, Mr Jiang listened intently, his eyes sparkling

with pride as he looked at Lin Feiran's phone screen and nodded enthusiastically, "Excellent! Excellent!"

Lin Feiran had prepared for two days to gather information about the milestones and achievements of their country. Mr Jiang's attentiveness and unwavering smile showed how deeply these updates resonated with him. The news about the nation's advancements was the best offering to this civic-minded gentleman.

"Anyway, our country has made remarkable progress!" Lin Feiran ran out of words but tried his best to stand a little taller and make his tone bright and convincing to compensate.

Mr Jiang let out a sigh of satisfaction, his gaze drifting over the campus, familiar yet changed.

Leaning on the railing beside Mr Jiang, Lin Feiran felt a profound respect for Old Principal. As their conversations flowed effortlessly, fear had given way to deep admiration.

Lin Feiran has asked if Mr Jiang had any lingering wishes after the ceremony. He explained how attachments could influence the journey toward reincarnation. However, Mr Jiang expressed a desire to stay and continue watching over the school he founded to witness the future generations.

For Mr Jiang, remaining as the silent guardian of the school was a more fulfilling conclusion than any beginning reincarnation could offer.

After addressing most of Mr Jiang's concerns, Lin Feiran moved on to his own. He really wanted to clear his name first. "Mr Jiang, actually... I'm not really a troublemaker. I even ranked within the top ten in our class last midterms."

Mr Jiang responded with a grave nod. "It's important to keep

striving."

"Absolutely! I plan to!" Lin Feiran burst out before tentatively broaching his request. "I was wondering... if it's not too much trouble. Could I ask for a favour? In return, I could bring you more books to stave off boredom." Realizing how his offer might be perceived, he quickly added, "Of course, I'll bring the books regardless of your answer..."

Mr Jiang chuckled softly. "Such enterprising young people today! Go on, state your request."

Lin Feiran brightened with the encouragement and requested earnestly. "You see, Mr Jiang, I'm staying in dorm 508, and it's, well, quite crowded with other... tenants. Sixteen ghosts made it their home. They're constantly singing and dancing, and it's really affecting my studies since I can see them. I was hoping... maybe you could have a word with them? Ask them to move somewhere else?"

What a smart little sticky rice cake he was! He made full use of everything available and even looked for a supernatural shortcut to a quieter dorm life!

After observing the respect other ghosts showed towards the dignified principal for some time, Lin Feiran decided to seek his assistance. As Mr Jiang patrolled the school grounds, even the most obstinate ghosts made way as a clear sign of respect. Lin Feiran reasoned that if anyone could persuade the sixteen ghosts in his dorm to relocate, it could only be Mr Jiang.

The presence of these spectral onlookers was becoming increasingly intrusive, particularly during private moments with Gu Kaifeng. Just as the atmosphere would turn sweet with touches and kisses, the thought of an audience of ghosts would

instantly dampen Lin Feiran's mood.

Lin Feiran's attempts to address this directly with the ghosts were futile. That carefree DJ MC Headless even encouraged him to join their never-ending party, completely missing the point of his complaints!

"The disruption of studies is indeed unacceptable," Mr Jiang agreed with solemnity. "I will speak to them on your behalf."

"Thank you!" Lin Feiran's gratitude was immense with a surge of relief. He was about to express his thanks more profusely when the rooftop door opened with a creak, and Gu Kaifeng entered.

His approach was marked by a mix of concern and irritation. "What are you doing up here, babe? Why didn't you answer my calls?"

Caught off guard, Lin Feiran stood rooted to the spot, embarrassment washing over him.

Upon hearing that, Mr Jiang flew into a rage. "Babe? What babe? I haven't even started on your inappropriate relationship with him..."

But before he could finish, Gu Kaifeng had Lin Feiran wrapped in his arms, cutting off Mr Jiang's tirade like a call dropped mid-conversation.

Embarrassed and wary of Mr Jiang's gaze, Lin Feiran pushed against Gu Kaifeng, cheeks aflame. "Don't kiss!" he pleaded, twisting away. "This isn't the time..."

"Are we playing this game again?" Gu Kaifeng whispered, a hint of amusement in his voice as he entertained Lin Feiran's attempts to push him away only to pull him in for more prolonged, deep kisses.

"Who's playing..." Lin Feiran's thoughts raced. He seriously considered using the "Sharing Yin" spell on Gu Kaifeng as a genuine solution.

The audacity of the "Sharing Yin" spell was that it required the exchange of three substances between the spell caster and the recipient: saliva, blood, and... *that*. The requirements for an intimate connection were daunting, not to mention the uncertainty of Gu Kaifeng's willingness to gain the ability to see ghosts. Although the spell suggested that the ability could be controlled after completion, Lin Feiran was still cautious about taking such a significant step.

That evening, when Lin Feiran scanned the dorm with his Yin-yang Eye, he noticed the usual spectral residents had vacated! He wondered which dorm had become the new haunt for the ghostly assembly. At any rate, at least his room was peaceful at last.

Mr Jiang had acted with remarkable efficiency. Relieved, Lin Feiran meticulously checked every nook and cranny, including the wardrobe and under the bed, for any stragglers. Only upon ensuring the space was ghost-free did he allow himself a sigh of relief.

He had harboured a small fear that, in clearing out the ghosts, Mr Jiang might decide to keep watching himself...

As the mid-December chill enveloped the dormitory, the warmth of the bed was the best comfort. It was barely 9 p.m., yet they had both washed up and were winding down for the night. Gu Kaifeng, with an English exam paper and a sturdy notebook as his desk, had made his bed a makeshift study. On the other

hand, Lin Feiran stood by the desk, organizing his unfinished homework, and couldn't help but steal glances at Gu Kaifeng, who radiated a certain allure while concentrating.

The realization that they were truly alone without any ghostly spectators sent an unexpected thrill through Lin Feiran. His heart raced with excitement and warmth.

*What am I thinking? I shouldn't become Gu Kaifeng!* He mentally chastised himself, deliberately shifting his focus to his math homework while gathering his papers and pen.

Just as Lin Feiran lowered his eyes, Gu Kaifeng, who appeared to be completely engrossed in his paper, surreptitiously glanced in his direction, visually mind fucking Lin Feiran from head to toe. The moment Lin Feiran looked up, Gu Kaifeng looked away, pretending to be totally focused on his paper.

Lin Feiran gave him a dubious look in return.

Gu Kaifeng's attempt at seriousness lasted all but three seconds before a smirk betrayed him.

"You haven't been studying at all!"

Gu Kaifeng burst out laughing before tossing his English paper aside. He plopped down on the bed with his arms wide open. "Come on up, let me give you a hug."

Lin Feiran feigned disinterest, but his eagerness was evident. He quickly joined Gu Kaifeng under the quilt to seek the warmth of his embrace.

Now, they finally had their private moment, and Lin Feiran could no longer hide his excitement!

Gu Kaifeng pressed a passionate kiss to Lin Feiran's cheek before his hands wandered under the quilt. Lin Feiran wriggled uncomfortably. "Why are you touching my feet?"

"Can't hubby warm your feet?" Gu Kaifeng quipped, his hold firm. "They're cold."

Caught in Gu Kaifeng's hold, Lin Feiran flushed with shyness, his attempts to protest futile. Lin Feiran has had cold hands and feet during winter since childhood, so he never really saw it as a problem.

"Here, sit up. Extend your feet and I'll warm them for you," Gu Kaifeng directed.

Lin Feiran longed to spend some time kissing, holding, and caressing Gu Kaifeng instead, but he was too shy to express his desire. Reluctantly, he shuffled to the bed's edge, turned to face Gu Kaifeng, and stretched his feet towards him. Gu Kaifeng lifted the hem of his pyjamas, cradled Lin Feiran's ankles, and placed those frosty feet against his warm abdomen. Covering them with the fabric of his pyjamas, he reached again for the discarded English paper.

"Don't warm them with your stomach," Lin Feiran said, concern lacing his voice. "You might catch a cold like that."

"Then where should I warm them?" Gu Kaifeng caught Lin Feiran's restless feet and pressed one of them down. "Would you prefer to warm them here instead?" He flashed a rogue grin.

Lin Feiran's mind buzzed as he felt the object heating up and hardening under his feet. He swallowed hard and replied firmly, "No."

Gu Kaifeng raised an eyebrow. "You really don't like it?"

Lin Feiran hesitated before hiding most of his face behind the quilt, leaving only his bright black eyes visible. He admitted with a quiet voice, "Maybe not."

Gu Kaifeng lightly bit his lower lip as he cradled Lin Feiran's

ankle and guided his foot up and down against it. Lin Feiran could feel the shape of the object under the fabric in the arch of his foot. He pulled the quilt higher to cover more of his face, feeling like an ostrich with only its head in the sand. He then started to move his foot back and forth to rub against that sensitive organ. Watching Gu Kaifeng's surprised and aroused expression, Lin Feiran blushed deeply, burying his face in the quilt again as he became too shy to meet Gu Kaifeng's gaze.

A few moments later, Gu Kaifeng displayed a rare gentleness and let that foot go. He then leaned in close to pull the quilt away to reveal Lin Feiran's face. With Lin Feiran cornered, Gu Kaifeng showered his flushed cheeks and lips with kisses and playfully nibbled on his earlobe, murmuring, "The way you look at me..."

"... Not the ear..." The second Lin Feiran's earlobe got nipped, a wicked tingle zapped through his waist.

Gu Kaifeng's laughter vibrated against Lin Feiran's skin as he soothed the spot with a gentle lick. "You're too tempting. I almost came from that gaze alone."

A pleased smile blossomed on Lin Feiran's face. "Can't help being so captivating."

"Indeed, you've captured the heart of a charmer like me. What does that make you, if not the ultimate heart-stealer?" Gu Kaifeng teased, his fingers playing with the edge of Lin Feiran's waistband.

Despite longing for more luscious moments with Gu Kaifeng after having a taste of erotic pleasure for the first time, Lin Feiran had been cautious, mindful of their ghostly spectators. Gu Kaifeng, after a few failed attempts to initiate make-out sessions

at the dorm, figured Lin Feiran was just being shy. So, he cooked up a little plot this time.

"I'm happy you realize," Lin Feiran boasted, basking in his newfound title. His tail was perked up in pride, leaving his behind undefended.

"Of course I do." Gu Kaifeng playfully slid Lin Feiran's pyjama pants to the side. He let his fingers wander for a moment to appreciate the smoothness of Lin Feiran's legs. Then, he started his sweet talk. "Ranran, even though you're ten centimetres shorter than me..."

Lin Feiran's eyebrows drew together in a slight frown before correcting him. "Nine."

Gu Kaifeng was amused at the correction before he casually shed his own pyjama pants and cosied up next to Lin Feiran, aligning their legs as if trying to compare the length of them. "Okay, you're nine centimetres shorter than me, but look at how well-proportioned you are," he gestured. "Your legs are almost as long as mine. You've grown exactly where it counts."

Lin Feiran felt both confused and proud. He questioned the accuracy of Gu Kaifeng's observation but also enjoyed the compliments. He warmed to the idea that his growth spurt might have been perfect.

As Lin Feiran was lost in thought, Gu Kaifeng crossed the last hurdle, his touch igniting a fire throughout Lin Feiran's body. It was then that Lin Feiran realized he was sliding down the wall, trapped beneath Gu Kaifeng.

*So that's why they said sweet talking can be very dangerous!*

Gu Kaifeng lay gently on the top. They were both down to their last piece of clothing. Gu Kaifeng was erect, his dick

straining against his boxer briefs. As he rubbed himself against Lin Feiran's sleeping body, he also kissed Lin Feiran's earlobe, nape, and collarbone. After Lin Feiran became aroused, Gu Kaifeng removed his little sticky rice cake's final layer of wrapping from under the covers together with his and tossed them out from under the quilt.

Without any ghosts around, Lin Feiran was extremely enthusiastic in bed. He hooked his arm around Gu Kaifeng's neck and initiated many kisses. When Gu Kaifeng was lost in the moment while moving the two members rhythmically, Lin Feiran even reached out to touch Gu Kaifeng's butt.

Thanks to his regular workouts, Gu Kaifeng's muscles were well-defined and balanced, offering a superb feel—firm yet soft, irresistibly addictive, and made one yearn for more after just a single touch.

*Ah! How did I end up a total pervert like Gu Kaifeng?*

After a brief moment of exploratory carelessness under the quilt, Lin Feiran quickly pulled back his hand as though he had committed a crime and gave Gu Kaifeng an innocent look. After a brief silence, he muttered, "...I didn't mean to."

Suppressing a laugh, Gu Kaifeng shifted from rubbing their dicks to placing one hand on Lin Feiran's back while his other hand guided Lin Feiran's to rest against his own back. "Let's explore each other," he whispered in a low voice.

Lin Feiran's cheeks turned a deeper shade of red, his mouth forming protests that didn't quite match the earnest curiosity of his hands.

Entwined on the bed, their quilt moved up and down in rhythmic waves over them. A sweet symphony of kisses and

gasps escaped from underneath, setting the room ablaze with their intensity.

After clearing their lust, they cleaned their body with wet wipes. The "exercise" also warmed up Lin Feiran's hands and feet. Now dressed and nestled under a warm quilt, they snuggled together and worked on their homework.

Such is life.

Before they knew it, Christmas Eve had arrived. It fell on a Saturday, and students normally would have headed home after four afternoon classes. However, to deter holiday festivities, the school scheduled an extended evening study session until 7 p.m.

As early winter dusk settled in before six, there were whispers among the students that it was snowing. They stole curious glances at the windows, captivated by the snowflakes twirling in the thick night air, their glow softening the darkness outside.

Ms Zheng, overseeing the study session, quickly curbed the excitement. "What's there to stare at? There'll be plenty of time after school. Stay focused," she admonished, her presence quelling the bubbling anticipation. When she reached Lin Feiran's desk at the back, she paused to critique his English essay, her fingertip idly tracing the nearly illegible words. She sighed and shook her head. "This handwriting..."

"I wasn't scribbling, Ms Zheng," Lin Feiran clarified.

Gu Kaifeng couldn't help but snicker.

"I know," Ms Zheng walked off with, still a bit concerned. It was then that Lin Feiran's Yin-yang Eye activated. Almost out of habit, he looked around Ms Zheng in search of the little ghost girl.

To his astonishment, the little ghost girl, previously transparent as her attachments weakened, now appeared as vivid as they first met. Lin Feiran caught sight of her in an instant.

He worried her attachments had somehow intensified again. Before he could ask, she gave Lin Feiran a bright smile and said, "I'm leaving."

Quietly, he asked, "Where to?"

"To reincarnate," she replied serenely, her once shadowed eyes now shimmering with the radiance of glowing amber.

"I came to say thank you." The little ghost girl continued, her smile deepening to reveal dimples, her gaze laden with sincerity as she looked at Lin Feiran. "Thank you. I am now free of regrets."

Lin Feiran bit his lip, offering a silent nod in acknowledgement.

Then, her attention drifted to Gu Kaifeng, a mischievous sparkle in her eyes. She leaned closer to Lin Feiran, her voice a whisper meant for his ears alone, "I wish you both everlasting happiness."

The comment sent Lin Feiran's cheeks aflame with embarrassment!

"I know you two are a couple," said the ghost girl while touching the tip of her index fingers together with a smile. "You're perfect for each other."

Lin Feiran was speechless. *This kid knew that much!*

"Farewell." The little ghost girl gave Lin Feiran a wave, and with a lightness in her step, she approached the podium.

Ms Zheng, having finished her supervision, was now jotting notes at her desk. The girl moved closer to Ms Zheng and gently

kissed her cheek, whispering, "Mom, I'm off now."

Lin Feiran watched as Ms Zheng's pen halted mid-stroke, her expression registering momentary perplexity. She glanced around the room, seeking an explanation for the sensation before she resumed her task.

The little ghost girl then picked up her cherished bunny toy and doll from under the podium, giving them each a loving kiss before setting them down at Ms Zheng's feet, leaving behind companions for her mother.

With that, she made her way cheerfully to the classroom door...

As this unfolded, Gu Kaifeng's eyes were on Lin Feiran and noticed the dreamy look and flush on his cheeks. Gu Kaifeng mischievously coughed, assuming he was wrapped up in some fanciful daydream. However, Lin Feiran, oblivious to the jest, abruptly stood up and headed out.

Lin Feiran stopped by the podium. "Ms Zheng, may I go to the toilet?"

"Sure," she replied without further inquiry.

Lin Feiran followed the little ghost girl out of the classroom, but despite her small stature and leisurely pace, he found himself unable to close the distance between them.

She danced lightly down the dim corridor, descended the stairs, and exited the academic building. She never looked back, and her steps were as silent as the falling snow. From somewhere, the soft song of "Silent Night" began to fill the air, its ethereal melody blending seamlessly with the quiet of the evening: *"Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright..."*

The freshly fallen snow, illuminated under the streetlamps,

shimmered like moonlit crystals. Barefoot and in her simple dress, the little girl stepped into the snow, hesitating as if savouring the cold embrace and then, she ran off—her thin form blending with the falling snowflakes until she disappeared.

This was her journey to reincarnation.

Left behind were delicate footprints in the snow, a silent testament to her brief existence in this world.

Lin Feiran stood motionless by the entrance to the academic building, gazing at the footprints that traced her path. He was reminded of the mother cat from that day. Just before she passed away, he still had yang energy from Gu Kaifeng, so he hadn't activated his Yin-yang Eye. However, he had still sensed the presence of the unseen cat, felt a soft touch against his ankle, and heard a faint meow.

*Could it be that a spirit, on the brink of reincarnation, possesses a fleeting yet potent energy capable of leaving a mark on the physical world? As if rallying one last time before giving a final farewell?*

Engulfed in his thoughts, Lin Feiran stood there, unaware of the fine snow that clung to his eyelashes or the cold that painted his cheeks and hands pink. The chill did not bother him.

He remained rooted at the entrance, his gaze fixed intently, almost foolishly, on the trail of footprints before him—the evidence of her existence.

Behind him, the warm embrace of Gu Kaifeng's hands broke through his reverie and gently pulled him back to the present. Lin Feiran didn't need to turn around to know who it was. The faint whispers of the other ghosts receded, and the delicate footprints in the snow began to blur under a fresh layer, like a secret being buried.

Gu Kaifeng turned him around with a gentle inquiry, "What were you doing out here, babe?"

Lin Feiran's thoughts were still full of the little ghost girl's departure, replied softly with a trace of wistfulness in his tone. "Just watching the snow fall."

Gu Kaifeng chuckled, lightening the mood. "Sentimental, aren't you? You should have called me to join you."

"I was on my way back from the toilet and got distracted by the snow. How come you're here though?"

Gu Kaifeng's reply came with a hint of amusement. "You were gone too long, so Ms Zheng sent me to check on you. She was worried you'd gotten lost."

The mention of Ms Zheng prompted Lin Feiran one last thing he could do for the little ghost girl. He resolved to write another anonymous letter, hoping to assure Ms Zheng that her daughter had left this world peacefully without any regrets.

"If Ms Zheng asks, just say you had a stomach ache," Gu Kaifeng suggested, aware that his ever-so-dutiful boyfriend wasn't adept at lying. "Let's keep the snow out of it, okay?"

"I know," Lin Feiran answered with a playful roll of his eyes. "Let's go inside."

Before they could take a step, Gu Kaifeng paused, pulling a tissue from his pocket to dab at the snowflakes melting in Lin Feiran's hair. He then cradled Lin Feiran's cold, reddened cheeks, smiling at the obvious sign of his brief escape into the cold. "You looked too much like someone who's been out in the snow."

A warmth spread through Lin Feiran as he covered Gu Kaifeng's hands with his own, the corners of his mouth lifting in a

small smile.

As they made their way back to the classroom, the echoes of "Silent Night" lingered in the air, weaving a tapestry of emotion within Lin Feiran that was too deep for words. Gu Kaifeng's presence, illuminated by the corridor's dim light, appeared even more striking and warm. In a moment of shared silence, as their eyes met, Lin Feiran found himself wishing that Gu Kaifeng could witness the unseen moments too. Seeing the world beyond... maybe it wasn't such a bad thing after all.

Gu Kaifeng's playful voice broke the silence, "You know if I hadn't been there, you might have given yourself away, little goof."

Lin Feiran instantly reverted to his aloof facade.

*I'm actually quite clever, thank you very much!*

Upon their return to the class, Ms Zheng allowed Lin Feiran to slip back to his seat without any admonishment. As the session ended and Ms Zheng left, a palpable buzz of excitement filled the air.

Wang Zhuo, ever the ringleader, was already gathering the group and proposing a spur-of-the-moment celebration for Christmas Eve. He bounded over to Gu Kaifeng's desk. "Hey, Bro Kai, Saozi, are you in for karaoke? Everyone's heading out."

Gu Kaifeng turned to Lin Feiran. "Wanna go, babe?"

Wang Zhuo caught the term, his smirk broadening. "Babe, huh?"

Catching the act, He Hao slung his schoolbag over his shoulder and latched his arms around Wang Zhuo's neck, feigning confusion. "Why are you calling me?"

Wang Zhuo paused before realizing. He jested, "Just missed you, is all."

He Hao's smile widened. "That's more like it. How about a kiss for that?"

With that, they turned to face each other and simultaneously shared an air kiss.

*Well, this might seem like a "normal kind of joke" among straight guys!*

In their light-hearted banter, Lin Feiran leaned closer to Gu Kaifeng. "They're all set on karaoke, but is that something you're up for? We could hit the amusement park instead, maybe catch the night shows."

Gu Kaifeng brushed against Lin Feiran's nose affectionately. "Why wouldn't I be? I love listening to you sing. As long as you're okay with the hustle and bustle, I'm in."

Lin Feiran lit up. "Okay, let's go."

Despite being at the school for a while, Lin Feiran hadn't made many close friends. Karaoke would have been the perfect opportunity to socialize. Moreover, he enjoyed the thrill of performing in front of an audience and naturally sought out such gatherings.

The decision was made, and they joined the group, which was composed of: Wang Zhuo, He Hao, three guys who regularly played basketball with Gu Kaifeng, and their girlfriends, a total of ten. They divided into three taxis and set off for the nearest commercial district.

In the taxi, Wang Zhuo wore a look of mock despair. "I just realized, out of the ten of us, only He Ritian and I are single. Two singles against four couples. Brutal!"

Lin Feiran, now comfortably donning the "couple" tag, playfully suggested, "You could always pair up with He Hao."

He Hao laughed, "I'm up for it."

Wang Zhuo joined in on the joke. "Alright, He Hao, you're my wife for the day."

Lin Feiran couldn't resist a jab. "The question of who's the wife is still open, 'Tiantian' could be a cute nickname for you, Wang Zhuo." he quipped, "Look at that, He Ritian[18] and Tiantian[19], what a pair!"

Lin Feiran, often the butt of Wang Zhuo's jokes, seized his moment for a witty comeback!

"Sounds perfect. You can be my sweetie every day."[19] He Hao quickly added.

Wang Zhuo brushed it off with a wave, "Oh, knock it off! If anyone's the 'Sweetie' here, it's you!"

The group's arrival at the karaoke spot marked the start of a session brimming with music and laughter. Everyone already had their turn at the mic except for Gu Kaifeng. As the other boys shifted their attention to drinking games, Lin Feiran and the three girls continued to eagerly queue up songs. Lin Feiran's singing talent stood out, drawing rounds of applause, with Gu Kaifeng being his loudest supporter.

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19 Ritian, Tiantian, and sweetie: As explained in footnote 18, page 327, He Hao's nickname is He Ritian, and the meaning of Ri can refer to "fuck", so Ritian could also mean "Fuck Tian". Here, Lin Feiran deliberately called Wang Zhuo "Tiantian" to indicate who was leading the charge. In addition, Tiantian shares similar pronunciation with "every day" and "sweetie" in Chinese.

After he finished his latest song, Lin Feiran sat down next to Gu Kaifeng. "Feeling alright? You've been drinking too much."

"I'm perfectly fine. It's just that your voice is captivating, babe." With a slight flush to his cheeks, Gu Kaifeng rested his head in Lin Feiran's lap and wrapped his arms around him. He snuggled closer and affectionately rubbed his face against Lin Feiran's lower abdomen, breathing in deeply. "You smell amazing."

Flustered, Lin Feiran gently tugged at Gu Kaifeng's ear. "Where exactly are you smelling?"

At that moment, a slightly tipsy classmate stumbled over, setting down three glasses of beer. "He's not off the hook yet! He owes three more drinks from the last game!"

Gu Kaifeng pretended not to hear but nestled deeper into Lin Feiran's arms, softly chanting, "Darling, hubby, babe, Ranran..."

Lin Feiran figured the drunken allure was lost in the booming music of the room. Emboldened, he whispered back, "I'm right here."

Gu Kaifeng pushed the act further. He playfully bit at Lin Feiran's shirt and slurred slightly. "No more drinks for me... Let's head home, Ranran..."

"I'll cover for him. He's had enough." Lin Feiran stepped in.

Slightly unsteady because of his own alcohol intake, Wang Zhuo slurred to the classmate, "Let Lin Feiran take those drinks. They're basically a pair, one unit when it comes down to it."

Lin Feiran chose to ignore the inebriated commentary. Instead, he coolly lifted and emptied each glass, one by one.

Thanks to his grandpa's genes, Lin Feiran had a high toler-

ance for alcohol. He wasn't a drinker by choice, but a few beers were hardly enough to faze him. The only complaint was the bloated feeling after consuming alcohol.

He was now a little sticky rice cake soaked in beer!

After patting his mouth dry, Lin Feiran flashed a victorious smile. "Alright, I'm taking him home. You guys have fun."

As they prepared to leave, Gu Kaifeng draped himself around Lin Feiran tightly as if they were pieces of a puzzle. Lin Feiran, amused yet slightly exasperated, turned to look at Gu Kaifeng. He gently patted his face, teasing, "Can you make it on your own? I can't carry you, you know."

Prompted by the challenge, Gu Kaifeng found his footing and straightened up, albeit a bit wobbly. His eyes, clouded by alcohol, lingered on Lin Feiran with such a warm, affectionate gaze that it could melt hearts, much like a puppy adoring its master. This look stirred something in Lin Feiran, making his heart skip.

While Lin Feiran guided Gu Kaifeng out and booked a taxi with his phone, Gu Kaifeng watched him intently as if seeing Lin Feiran in a new light.

Once the taxi was confirmed, Lin Feiran couldn't help but tease. "What's with that look? Don't tell me you've forgotten me?"

"I know exactly who you are," Gu Kaifeng responded with utmost seriousness, his voice steady despite his intoxication. "You're Lin Feiran, and I really, really like you."

The sincerity in Gu Kaifeng's confession struck a chord in Lin Feiran, who looked around to ensure they were alone before responding with equal fervour, "And I really like you too, Gu

Kaifeng."

With that, Lin Feiran helped Gu Kaifeng to wait for the taxi by the roadside. The snowfall had stopped, leaving behind a crisp, cold air. A chilly breeze sobered Lin Feiran up.

"Ranran," Gu Kaifeng became a "real" sticky rice cake under the influence of alcohol as he leaned in to gently nuzzle Lin Feiran's neck. "Call me hubby. I want to hear it," he whispered affectionately.

Knowing that inebriation might make Gu Kaifeng forgetful by morning, Lin Feiran brushed his lips against Gu Kaifeng's ear, intentionally deepening his voice to a husky whisper. "Hubby."

The word resonated with Gu Kaifeng, who rubbed his ear as if to savour the sound. "Again, again. It sounds so sweet," he pleaded.

Amused by his reaction, Lin Feiran indulged him, repeating softly, "Hubby, husband..."

"Damn, I almost got hard," Gu Kaifeng mumbled with a drunken slur as he tightened his grip around Lin Feiran's waist.

With a hesitant bite of his lip, Lin Feiran locked eyes with the man who made his heart skip. Clinging to the thought that Gu Kaifeng wouldn't remember any of this once sober, he summoned the courage to whisper, "Then... when we get home, I... I can help you with that."

"Do you enjoy helping me?" said Gu Kaifeng with a teasing nibble on Lin Feiran's earlobe, his breath heavy with the scent of spirits.

"Yes, I do. And I enjoy the moments when you help me too," Lin Feiran confessed, feeling his cheeks warm. Empowered by

Gu Kaifeng's current state, he boldly expressed the desires he normally kept hidden. "Once a day may not be enough. I... I'd like it in the morning as well, or maybe twice in the evening. But you never initiate, and I'm too embarrassed to suggest it."

Reflecting on their first discussion about zodiac signs at Gu Kaifeng's place, Lin Feiran remembered scoffing at the idea that Scorpios harboured intense sexual desires. Yet, Gu Kaifeng's words were prophetic. Since that deeply intimate night at Gu Kaifeng's home, Lin Feiran felt as though a dormant part of him had been awakened. Now, each glance at Gu Kaifeng sent his mind spiralling into a whirlpool of longing.

"Remember what you said, babe," Gu Kaifeng's voice shattered the silence, suddenly dangerously serious.

Lin Feiran turned his head in surprise towards Gu Kaifeng almost mechanically as if he could hear his neck creaking.

Just then, the taxi arrived.

Flushed with embarrassment, Lin Feiran hurriedly helped Gu Kaifeng into the backseat before trying to take the front seat himself. However, Gu Kaifeng kept the back door open, insisting Lin Feiran to sit with him. Worrying about what the driver might think, Lin Feiran gave in with burning cheeks. Despite the car's blaring music, he could still hear Gu Kaifeng's deep breaths.

Attempting to preserve his dignity, Lin Feiran stared out the window, only to be met with Gu Kaifeng's chuckling behind him. That laughter shattered his last semblance of calm. Turning sharply, he confronted Gu Kaifeng. "Have you been faking your drunkenness?"

"I was genuinely tipsy earlier," Gu Kaifeng assured, sincerity

in his eyes. "But stepping out into the cold night air sobered me up."

Lin Feiran reflected on their departure from the karaoke and realized Gu Kaifeng's drunken antics had been exaggerated once outside, though he hadn't thought much of it at the time.

As Gu Kaifeng's hand found its way to Lin Feiran's waist, he began. "About what you said earlier..."

"Enough," Lin Feiran cut him off, flustered.

"No, I think we should talk about it." Gu Kaifeng was undeterred and teased further.

Lin Feiran attempted to cover Gu Kaifeng's mouth. "Do I need to silence you myself?"

Gu Kaifeng captured Lin Feiran's wrist. "How exactly would you 'silence' me?" His gaze drifted downwards.

The mere thought sent waves of excitement through Lin Feiran. He yearned for it yet decided to stay silent.

Gu Kaifeng, closing the distance, dropped his voice to a whisper, teasing yet tender, "You're full of surprises, babe."

Lin Feiran drew back and adjusted his scarf to shield his ear and mouth. "I'm a young man, too." With only his nose exposed, he whispered back with a touch of defiance.

*I am at an age brimming with youthful energy!*

*Yearning for release twice a day is not only natural but necessary!*

*Hmph!*

And so began little sticky rice cake's blissful days with his "twice a day" wish fulfilled.

TBC

S$ 25 SGD

FOR MATURE READERS

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